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MUSIC AND THE WORD

IN THE WORKS OF

T.S. ELIOT AND JAMES JOYCE

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**A thesis submitted in 2004 for the degree of PhD at the
Department of English Studies, University of Durham.**

By Julian Hall



20 APR 2005

Abstract for Music and the word in the works of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce, a thesis submitted for the degree of PhD at the University of Durham, Department of English Studies, in 2004, by Julian Hall.

This thesis describes primarily the influence of music on the works of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. This is undertaken in four chapters, framed by an introduction and conclusion. The place that music had in the lives and artistic convictions of Eliot and Joyce is discussed initially, together with the aesthetic background to the period during which these authors worked, with reference to the ways it encouraged artists generally to think across disciplines. The changing beliefs and conventions of Modernism are particularly important in this respect. Selected works by Eliot and Joyce are then examined for the effect that musical sound and musical structures had on their composition. Following this, more specific analogies are drawn between particular composers and pieces of music, and significant texts by Eliot and Joyce. The extent to which analogy is possible, or even desirable, is also considered. Some assessment is made of the critical background to both the structural and analogical aspects of musical influence. Finally, a representative survey of some musical settings of work by Eliot and Joyce is offered in an attempt to show how the exchange of ideas between the two disciplines is bi-directional. An audio tape has been appended in order to further the reader's appreciation of particular examples under discussion.



Contents

<i>Statement of Copyright</i>	3
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	4
<i>Notes on the text</i>	5
Prelude	6
Aesthetic and Biographical backgrounds	10
Music in the lives of Eliot and Joyce	10
Eliot and musical aesthetics	15
The wider aesthetic background	26
Myth	41
Conclusion	43
Sounds and Structures	44
Sounds and effects: Joyce	44
Sounds and effects: Eliot	57
Musical structures:	63
<i>Eliot</i>	64
<i>Joyce</i>	78
The case for analogies	99
Eliot and Beethoven	99
Eliot and Bartók	115
Non-Western analogues	130
Joyce and musical analogues	140
Ives and Wagner	150
Joyce, Sterne and C.P.E. Bach	153
Settings of Eliot and Joyce	163
Eliot and Britten	163
Eliot and Stravinsky	172
Other settings of <u>Four Quartets</u>	178
Minor poems and <u>The Rock</u>	182
Settings of Joyce's <u>Chamber Music</u>	187
<u>The Joyce Book</u>	195
Settings of major Joyce texts	197
Joyce, Schoeck and Antheil	206
Conclusion	208
Coda	211
<i>Musical Examples</i>	214
<i>Bibliography</i>	215

Statement of Copyright

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January 2004.

Notes on the text

Editions used for references to primary texts are given within each chapter. Works which are cited more than once, are given a key word for use after the first full reference. For convenience, if the same work is referred to in a subsequent chapter, the key word is re-introduced after the full reference.

Details of the timings of the recorded musical examples are to be found on the page immediately before the bibliography, and details of the recordings used are placed in the bibliography itself.

PRELUDE

Prior to the Age of Enlightenment, literature and music had, for centuries, enjoyed a close relationship and were in many ways inter-related. Following their division into separate arts, away from folk epic and minstrelsy which had melded them into a single entity, the two disciplines continued to influence each other, enjoying particularly fruitful periods, such as the Elizabethan age. Increasing specialisation in the arts has, however, brought about the growing isolation of music and literature, a condition which has never been felt as acutely as at the present time. With the arrival of the Modernist movement in the early years of the twentieth-century, this separation was, in many respects, temporarily forgotten. Such was the dynamism of the age that all the arts were forced to reconsider their methodologies, opening the possibilities for collisions of thought and procedure between them. The years 1908 to 1922 were the epicentre of the seismic age of Modernism and a period of intense activity and change in both literature and music. In the history of European and American culture it is hard to find another time, of similarly short duration, when so much creative innovation occurred simultaneously in both of these arts. There is a lengthy list of well-known names – Eliot, Joyce, Pound, Woolf; Debussy, Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Bartók – and besides these the period also gave birth to a considerable range of new techniques and movements – imagism, stream of consciousness, Dadaism, atonality, serialism and so on, some of which continue to be relevant in the present day. The main aim of this thesis is to investigate the influences of music on Eliot and Joyce, and in doing so to discover to what extent the new techniques of musical language being developed have a literary counterpart. It is hoped to expose some of the common ground that was occupied by music and verbal forms during the time that each was subjected to unprecedented experimentation.

Besides charting the effects of music, both contemporary and past, on Eliot and Joyce, I shall also attempt to show the influence these writers had on composers closer to the present day. By examining some musical settings of each writer, it is possible to view the scope and progress of their respective outputs from a different angle, i.e. that of a musician's response to their words and structures.

The reasons for selecting Eliot and Joyce are as obvious as they are elusive. Both were radical Modernists and represent, at different stages in their lives, extremes of experimentation in poetry and prose respectively, during a period whose aesthetics lent themselves well to interdisciplinary thought and practice. Each developed their interest in the musical aspects of literary composition beyond the confines of the Modernist period, Eliot into the 1930's and 1940's with The Rock, Four Quartets and his plays, Joyce with Finnegans Wake. Both are often contradictory or evasive with regard to their own musical tastes, scattering behind them clues which are endlessly tantalising to the scholar concerning their listening habits and abilities. Besides their direct connections with music, Eliot and Joyce are both writers for whom the barriers of language invite transgression. Revolutionaries in their attitudes to language, they attempt to extend its aesthetic, semantic and even phonological boundaries, and in doing so build structures which demand analogy with another medium. One could say that, in the absence of any knowledge of their musical interests, both writers create works which are musical by default, as there is no other paradigm more suitable for comparison.

§

With two such seminal and, in Eliot's case, prolific, authors some limits must be drawn as to the scope of the enquiry. Clearly, most of Eliot's poetic output is relevant in some way to music but discussion will be chiefly of The Waste Land and Four Quartets, with some mention of earlier poems for their direct allusions to music or their structure. Of Eliot's plays, Murder in the Cathedral and The Family Reunion are the best examples of drama made from words alone, which are comparable with the performance of music. Eliot's prose will be invoked when required to substantiate ideas, opinions or speculation regarding his use of music, yet this aspect of his work yields no easy clues to the musical provenance of his poetic structures.

In Joyce's case the focus is narrower. Ulysses will be the central text for analysis as an example of prose in contrast to Eliot's poetry. There will be minimal reference to

earlier prose. Joyce's poetry will be discussed primarily for its role as text in musical settings. Finnegans Wake, despite its dense concentration of musical techniques, will be avoided in any depth for reasons of space. It alone would be the subject of a separate thesis.

During this study I intend to look mainly at the influence music had on these writers, as well as any influence arising from the currents of thought which affected both music and literature in similar ways. To a lesser degree, I will also consider the effect Eliot and Joyce may have exerted on subsequent composers in the survey of settings of their work. Additionally, it will be seen if any fresh interpretation of the prose or poetry may be made in the light of these settings.

In examining the musical influences on Eliot and Joyce it will be necessary in each case to look for primary evidence of musical material in the works themselves, as well as evidence behind the works. This latter may take the form of implied structural parallels with certain musical forms, contemporary with or anterior to the literary works, or of analogues with actual pieces of music. These pieces may again be contemporaneous or historical.

§

A significant area of danger in any study that crosses disciplinary borders is language. Specifically, problems arise when the language used to describe certain technical features in one disciplinary area overlap with the descriptive or more general terminology of the other. This can also happen within the same discipline between two different levels of discourse. To minimise any confusion it may be helpful to the reader to set out a few definitions and guidelines as to the use of some musical terms. The term "fugue" in music specifies the particular form of composition structured by the disciplined entry and combination of themes at certain pitches. "Fugal", on the other hand, is a much freer term, both within music, and outside it. A fugal composition may merely suggest a fugue, or aspects of one, and fugal writing in

literature has come to denote that which attempts to imitate music by expressing more than one thing at a time.

“Modulation” and “tonality” are also words which suffer from vagueness if used too generally. In strict musical terms, they refer to a change or transition in key within a piece, and the presence of a key (major or minor) in Western music, respectively. Yet applied to literature, modulation is often convenient to describe any general shift in mood or style, and the analogy becomes unspecific. Tonality can, of course, describe a scheme of colour in painting, but this is not necessarily analogous with its musical definition. Used in a literary context, without adequate qualification, the word once again becomes vague. I have avoided using such terms in any general sense, unless the context demands their explanation. “Sonata” is distinct from “sonata form”, the former denoting a specific type of composition, the latter a structural principle which may be applied to any type of composition. Other issues of terminology will be dealt with as they arise.

The audio tape which is appended to this thesis contains ten musical examples. These are intended to supplement the reader’s understanding of points in the text which can be more satisfactorily clarified and illuminated aurally.

AESTHETIC AND BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUNDS

Music in the lives of Eliot and Joyce

Before examining the influence on and presence of music in the poetry and novels of Eliot and Joyce, I would like to investigate the musical background of both writers, and the conception each had of music's role in the creation of verbal forms. Critical writings, lectures and letters are the main sources of this latter information, while biographical detail and early creative work substantiate the former.

Music was a vital and long-lasting presence in the lives of both Eliot and Joyce and a significant backdrop to their work. Eliot in his early life encountered the contrast between the relative cultural isolation of his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri, and the sophistication of summers spent in New England, in Boston or at Cape Ann, Massachusetts. Joyce's early years in Dublin exposed him to a diverse diet of musical culture which included opera, operetta, popular song and music-hall, all vital art forms in the city at the time. Both writers experienced life in culturally vibrant European cities - Eliot in London and Paris, Joyce in Paris and Zurich. And both writers had personal affinities with popular musical idioms. Joyce grew up in a family in which music was prized above literature, and his own musical abilities and knowledge were considerable. As a child and as a young man he frequently sang with family and friends the kinds of ballads and sentimental songs which appear in his novels. Such was his enthusiasm for the tenor voice that he more than once considered a singing career. Perhaps his proudest musical moment was sharing the stage of the Antient Concert Rooms in Dublin in 1904 with the famous Irish tenor, John McCormack, who also urged him to enter a tenor voice competition. At one stage Joyce hired a piano to help him practise, yet his inability to read well at sight (disqualifying him from competitions) and difficulty in paying for the lessons proved too frustrating for him to realise his performing ambitions.

One or two of Joyce's own musical compositions survive – melody lines to a poem by Yeats, 'Who Goes with Fergus', and "Bid Adieu", a tune he wrote to his own words from a piece in his early cycle of poems, Chamber Music. His tastes in music were wide-ranging, including Italian opera, Busoni, Schoenberg, Gluck, the Swiss

composer Othmar Schoeck, whom he met in Zurich, and Elizabethan pieces by lutenist-composers whose works Joyce used to copy out from manuscript sources. It was this latter interest which occasioned the title and construction of Chamber Music. His persistent tendency for cataloguing and ability to see the hidden connections between things also extended to music. After meeting the Irish tenor John Sullivan in Paris in 1929, Joyce is said to have calculated exactly the number of high notes in an opera score that Sullivan had to sing. In Ulysses the 'Sirens' episode is crammed with correspondences between musical ideas, devices or titles and the routine actions of characters in the Ormond Hotel bar. Eliot drew attention to Joyce's partial blindness as one reason for his musical sensitivity in his later work, claiming that the primary appeal of his writing is to the ear and not the visual imagination, and that, to be appreciated at all, Finnegans Wake must be read aloud.¹

Eliot's birth in St. Louis, a centre for the origins and publication of ragtime music at the turn of the century, connected him with the roots of American popular music and provided a foil to the highbrow and often pretentious musical life in New England. Eric Sigg even claims that Eliot's family connections with the anti-slavery movement, through his grandfather, Reverend Eliot's, support of the abolitionists, bequeathed him a sympathy with black American culture, its speech rhythms and music in particular.² It was perhaps such a personal association which was responsible for the surfacing of this cultural heritage in works such as 'Fragment of an Agon' from Sweeney Agonistes.³ There the syncopated rhythms of the parody song "Under the Bamboo Tree" derive from speech rhythms of black Mid-West America. Early jazz music was of such importance because of its roots in speech rhythms, syncopation being a natural part of these. The first draft of The Waste Land contained four contemporary American songs in its very opening.⁴ The references to music in Eliot's

¹ See T.S. Eliot, 'The Approach to James Joyce', The Listener, vol.30 (October 14, 1943), 446-7.

² See Eric Sigg, 'Eliot as a product of America', A. David Moody ed., The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot (Cambridge, 1994), 14-30.

³ Eliot's own 1947 reading of 'Fragment of an Agon' makes every attempt to convey the relentless rhythm of the words by avoiding the different tones of voice necessary to differentiate the characters in the scene. See sound recording Stratis Haviaras ed., The Poet's Voice. Poets reading aloud and commenting upon their works (Cambridge, MA, 1978).

⁴ In the chapter mentioned above Sigg gives useful references to the genesis of this material. He also notes that the line "O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag" from The Waste Land derives from a rag written for the Ziegfeld Follies of 1912 and may have been picked up by Eliot while in Boston (see p.28). The line is notable for the unexpected addition of a fifth syllable in the word "Shakespeherian" which disrupts the regular rhythm into a syncopated one.

early poems, such as 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'Conversation Galante' may be seen as representative of a decadent and pretentious attitude to music on the part of middle-class New Englanders yearning over-reverently for an exotic European culture they wished to claim for themselves.

The material which Eliot contributed to the church pageant play The Rock, staged in 1934, is the nearest he came to actual musical composition. The circumstances surrounding this and the material itself will be covered in Chapter Four. Eliot's involvement with this project typifies his often divided allegiances to both high art and popular art. Central to the popular element of The Rock was his interest in the music-hall. In 1920 Eliot became the London correspondent for The Dial and frequently used the opportunity to discuss the music-hall.⁵ He already knew much vaudeville repertoire from America when he arrived in England in 1914, and frequented music-halls in London and Oxford, even through their later decline. This had emerged previously in the 'pub-scene' in the second section of The Waste Land, and in the unfinished Sweeney Agonistes, serialised in The Criterion in 1926-7 and published as an incomplete work in 1932. In this latter, the music-hall tradition is invoked in the technique of giving the same line of dialogue to many different speakers in rapid succession. Eliot had also written an appreciation of the music-hall artist Marie Lloyd, whose death in 1922 affected him considerably, in which he admired the entertainer's ability to engage *artistically* with her audience without recourse to highbrow intellectualism. It often seems that when faced with this dilemma of successfully transmitting high art to large numbers of people, Eliot turned to music as a medium which could be appreciated at an elevated level without needing to be fully understood or deciphered. Music-hall entertainment combined directness of entertainment with poetry and, as he comments in an essay in The Sacred Wood, Eliot saw this as a modern equivalent of Elizabethan drama: "...our problem should be to take a form of entertainment, and subject it to the process which would leave it a form of art. Perhaps the music-hall comedian is the best material".⁶ Similar sentiments are expressed in a passage from The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism whereby a function of poetry is to give entertainment to large numbers of people and hence,

⁵ See T.S. Eliot, 'London Letter', The Dial, vol.70, 4 (April 1921), 448-53, which touches on the decline of the music-hall and mentions Marie Lloyd, and the June issue, vol.70, 6, 686-91, which discusses the difference between music-hall and revue. Eliot strongly favours the former.

⁶ T.S. Eliot, 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama', The Sacred Wood (London, 1932), 70.

“...from one point of view, the poet aspires to the condition of the music-hall comedian”.⁷ Eliot’s interest in the music-hall possibly contributed to his use of the chorus in the plays. As he himself suggested in the essay ‘Poetry and Drama’ and elsewhere in his prose, an important aim in gaining audience appeal in both The Family Reunion and The Cocktail Party was to write at two levels: one of common understanding (the Chorus) and another at a deeper level of human psychology (more intimate exchanges between the characters). Hence this experimental method would evolve a drama in the character of thriller and psychological investigation simultaneously.

Apart from these comments connected with the nature and construction of drama, there is hardly any acknowledgement in Eliot’s prose of particular popular music and the attraction it had for him. Eliot is said to have enjoyed My Fair Lady far more than Shaw’s Pygmalion. Apart from the fact that Eliot might have felt embarrassed by such an interest, and besides its artistic function, his fascination with the music-hall may be seen as a mask or aid to anonymity. Jonna Mackin deals critically with Eliot and the music-hall in her essay ‘Raising Life to a Kind of Art’, suggesting that his views on popular art as a class mediator for culture are over-romanticised, his interest in music-hall being principally a covert means of dealing with sexually explicit subject matter.⁸ She dismisses Eliot’s observations that music-hall was an exclusively working-class entertainment as inaccurate, and claims that performances Eliot attended were by then courting middle-class audiences. However, I do not wish to attempt a diagnosis of Eliot’s socio-cultural politics, or even the psychological reasons for his interest in and use of the music-hall tradition.

Aside from his novels, there is relatively little that Joyce wrote *about* music. It is true to say this of the theory and practice of music generally, and of specific composers or concerts. There is some commentary on the latter in Joyce’s letters, yet much of this reads like opinionated posturing for a specific recipient. The case is very different with Eliot’s critical writing. This is much more considered, the writing often becoming a miniature essay on the extent to which a musical language is comparable

⁷ T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London, 1933), 32.

⁸ Jonna Mackin, ‘Raising Life to a Kind of Art’ in John Xiros Cooper ed., T.S. Eliot’s Orchestra. Critical Essays on Poetry and Music (New York, 2000), 49-63 (50-1).

to, and translatable into a verbal one. In view of the search for musical analogies, structural and actual, which forthcoming chapters will present, and the importance assumed by Four Quartets in this quest, it will be useful to consider Eliot's writings about music with this in mind. There must, however, be a degree of caution exercised on the question of the validity of close parallels between poems and pieces of music, and on the desirability of equating a literary procedure with a musical one. Eliot is himself aware of the dangers of these.

In a lecture given at Harvard and published in 1951 under the title, 'Poetry and Drama', Eliot delineates, somewhat vaguely, a domain of feeling which can only be expressed in poetry. He also invokes a comparison with music at this point. The direction of the argument is towards intensity of expression and the limits of a discourse:

At such moments, we touch the border of those feelings
which only music can express. We can never emulate
music, because to arrive at the condition of music would
be the annihilation of poetry...⁹

According to Eliot, too exact or complete a simulation of music in poetry leads to the destruction of one or the other, or both. The inclusion of "musical" material or practices in poetry must be done in a spirit of idealism, working towards the mirage of their impossible union.

J.P. Barricelli, in his Introduction, sub-headed 'Critical Limitations in Musico-Literary Study', to Melopoiesis (1988) claims that Eliot's Four Quartets cannot be termed a "musical" work.¹⁰ His argument is largely centred upon the superficiality, as he deems it, of the word "musical", as used by critics and by Eliot himself in the essay, 'The Music of Poetry'. Barricelli concedes that there is a superficial resemblance between simple structural principles used in music and those employed in Four Quartets, but that the poetry does not stand up to analysis in musical terms. In a subsequent chapter I would like to argue that Eliot's poetry, particularly Four

⁹ T.S. Eliot, 'Poetry and Drama', On Poetry and Poets (London, 1957), 87. Cited as 'Drama' hereafter.

¹⁰ J.P. Barricelli, Melopoiesis. Approaches to the Study of Music and Literature (New York, 1988), 8.

Quartets and the poetic drama contemporary with these poems, need not stand trial by musical analysis nor by musical analogy with any one work in order to be recognised as musical. Indeed, it suffers for being subjected to such precise comparison. Many of the clues to what Eliot meant by a literary musicality are to be found in his own writing.

Eliot and musical aesthetics

Eliot stated in a letter of 1942 to John Hayward that the word “quartet” was a better title for the poems that make up Four Quartets than “sonata”.¹¹ “Sonata” he deemed to be “*too* musical”, not “*too musical*” (my italics here), indicating that some parallels were to be made with music by the reader, but perhaps not analytical ones. Eliot continued: “It suggests to me the notion of making a poem by weaving in together three or four superficially unrelated themes: the ‘poem’ being the degree of success in making a new whole out of them”.¹²

Earlier in the letter Eliot draws attention to the danger in applying explicitly musical titles, such as ‘symphony’, to literary works, citing the example of J. Gould Fletcher’s ‘Symphony in Blue’. This guardedness is understandable in the light of Eliot’s other remarks which disclaim a technical knowledge of music.¹³ However, is not the word “quartet”, like “sonata” loaded with a certain terminological weight, which suggests structural bases, as well as the way instruments or voices handle the material?

Historically quartets, assuming that Eliot meant string quartets, usually contained at least one movement in sonata form, a procedure whose underlying principle was the working out, development and restatement of contrasting material. They also, in their most developed form, used the four instruments in the most organic way possible. That is to say, each voice is as much a necessary part of the whole argument as the other, and is dependent on each of the others to articulate its share in the whole.

¹¹ Letter of September 3, 1942 in Helen Gardner, The Composition of “Four Quartets” (New York, 1978), 26. The latter cited as Composition hereafter.

¹² Composition, 26.

¹³ See undated letter from Eliot to Martin Shaw in E. Martin Browne, The Making of T.S. Eliot’s Plays (Cambridge, 1969), 13; also T.S. Eliot, ‘The Music of Poetry’, On Poetry and Poets (London, 1957), 38. The latter cited as ‘Music’ hereafter.

Eliot's description in part bears this out. The "weaving in together" of "three or four superficially unrelated themes" in order to synthesise them into a new whole conflates two ideas: the formal principle of developing contrasting material, and the use of several voices to do this. It is suggested in this description that the themes are the same as the voices; that, for example, the experience in the rose garden at the beginning of 'Burnt Norton' is a melody that belongs exclusively to one instrument, and that whenever this idea returns it is uttered by the same voice. This would, of course, be a highly unusual quartet that did this and Eliot's condensed description needs expanding in musical terms.

As Keith Alldritt has shown in Eliot's Four Quartets. Poetry as Chamber Music (London, 1978), there are voices *and* themes continually recombining in Four Quartets, in the way material is passed around and developed fragmentarily in a string quartet. Time, the nature of experience, the relationship of the artist to words, the theme of history, the theme of migration, all of these are handled by different voices, recognisable by the shifts in tone. Eliot's exposition of the word "quartet" seems to contain within it the principles of sonata form, the full musical parameters of which Eliot would have been familiar with from J.W.N. Sullivan's book, Beethoven: His Spiritual Development which appeared in London in 1927. Could he also have avoided using the term "sonata" as it suggested, most often, a composition for two instruments, a solo instrument or two groups of instruments? Multiple, independent voices of equal standing seem to be a prerequisite for Four Quartets. "Quartet" denotes this overtly whilst also connoting the structural rigour of sonata form.

In 1932 Eliot published an essay in The Criterion by J.B. Trend on the sonata. Trend had already endorsed Sullivan's book on Beethoven as a suitable literary approach to music in the March 1928 issue of The Criterion. The language in the former is deliberately non-technical and elucidates a structural point, not a specifically musical one:

The first movement of a sonata has a pattern like a pattern on a carpet, a pattern in which the different sections are distinct in

appearance and contrast with one another, though finally the pattern comes back again to the place where it started.¹⁴

Trend later makes an analogy between the recapitulation in a sonata form structure and a character in a play “who enters in the nick of time to save the situation”. The reappearance of the second subject in the structure is said to be “like recognising another character”.¹⁵ Eliot paid close attention to articles he published in The Criterion and it is interesting to note the frequent appearances of the word “pattern”, used so insistently by Trend in the above extract, in his own discussions of literary analogies with music, and in his association of music with drama. Reviewing Djuna Barnes’ Nightwood, Eliot comments, “Miss Barnes’s prose has the prose rhythm that is prose style, and the musical pattern which is not that of verse”.¹⁶ In speaking of the characters of the novel, Eliot admires “the whole pattern that they form”.¹⁷

An article entitled ‘The Need for Poetic Drama’, prepared for The Listener from a Schools Broadcast, compares the task of the prose dramatist to that of the musician: “...it is to see the whole thing as a whole musical pattern. And this is an entirely different thing from a play set to music. It is not like opera, but some musical form like the sonata or fugue”.¹⁸ The role of this pattern is of a deep-seated motor to the movement of surface action: “But underneath the action, which should be perfectly intelligible, there should be a musical pattern which intensifies our excitement by reinforcing it with feeling from a deeper and less articulate level”.¹⁹

In ‘The Music of Poetry’ a “musical” poem, “is a poem which has a musical pattern of sound and a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it, and ... these two patterns are indissoluble and one”.²⁰ The essay ‘Poetry and Drama’ speaks of the arrangement of voices in a scene of Romeo and Juliet as

¹⁴ J.B. Trend, ‘The Oxford History’, The Criterion, vol.11, 45 (July 1932), 698-704 (702). Cited as ‘Oxford History’ hereafter.

¹⁵ ‘Oxford History’, 702-3.

¹⁶ T.S. Eliot, ‘*Nightwood*. By Djuna Barnes’, The Criterion, vol.16, 64 (April 1937), 560-64 (561). Cited as *Nightwood* hereafter.

¹⁷ *Nightwood*, 563.

¹⁸ T.S. Eliot, ‘The Need for Poetic Drama’, The Listener, vol.16 (November 25, 1936), 994-5 (994). Cited as ‘Poetic Drama’ hereafter.

¹⁹ ‘Poetic Drama’, 994.

²⁰ ‘Music’, 33.

creating “a musical pattern...as surprising in its kind as that in early Beethoven”.²¹ I take “pattern” to mean a sense of design, which emerges from the cohesion of many disparate elements, a design which, although it is by no means random, operates at a less deliberate and conscious level than a simple ordering of parts. There is a comparable passage in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism linking sound in poetry to pre-conscious thought: “What I call the ‘auditory imagination’ is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word....”.²² This sense of pattern at a deeper level is borne out by the passage from ‘The Need for Poetic Drama’. In its sensitively directed prose for Sixth Forms this use of the phrase “musical pattern” suggests that Eliot regarded fully formed musical structures as useful paradigms with which to illuminate poetry (here, of course, he is discussing poetic drama), rather than surface features such as rhythm, melody or harmony. The “musical pattern which intensifies our excitement by reinforcing it with feeling from a deeper and less articulate level” is not just an attempt to mystify a process he cannot put into more concrete language. For Eliot the best form of communication in poetry always came prior to a full understanding of its meaning – it is sudden and direct, and does not depend on outside knowledge. The well-known remark from the essay on Dante that “...genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood” clearly supports the comments on musical patterns to suggest an alliance between musical and poetic impulses.²³

The earlier analogies with sonata or counterpoint indicate the presence of a structure that is determined and obeys a set of given rules, not one in which the author is at liberty to create his own structure, as a composer of opera may do. This suggests the musical models for literature are instrumental or orchestral compositions, rather than word settings. A remark from the last part of ‘The Music of Poetry’ is pertinent here: “It is in the concert room, rather than in the opera house, that the germ of a poem may be quickened”.²⁴ This is certainly borne out by what is known about Eliot’s listening

²¹ ‘Drama’, 87.

²² T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London, 1933), 118-9.

²³ T.S. Eliot, ‘Dante’, Selected Prose ed. Frank Kermode (London, 1975), 206. Cited as Selected hereafter. Remarks from the lecture The Frontiers of Criticism similarly stress the value of hearing the words before explaining them. Here much of Finnegans Wake is described as “beautiful nonsense” and Eliot longs for a recording of Joyce reading it. See T.S. Eliot, The Frontiers of Criticism (Minneapolis, 1956), 10.

²⁴ ‘Music’, 38.

preferences. Unlike Joyce, who was fascinated by the voice and performances of song and opera, Eliot tended towards chamber music – especially the string quartets of Beethoven and Bartók, which is music in which form presides over physical sound.

The sense of inevitability below the surface points towards a conception of music as analogous to syntax but not to semantics. There are no dictionary definitions in music but meaning is created or suggested through patterns. These patterns could be felt, if not readily articulated or analysed, by the non-specialist listener to be a unifying feature of a work merely from the clues that a buried structure throws up to the surface. It seems to be this aspect of music which, for Eliot, translates most satisfyingly into poetry, dependent upon no calculated equations between terminologies.

I will now turn in more detail to the single prose work which is most commonly invoked to justify a musical argument in Eliot's work, namely the text of the third W.P. Ker Memorial Lecture delivered at Glasgow University in 1942 entitled 'The Music of Poetry'. A central argument in this piece is that part of what is called the "music" in poetry derives from the sounds and rhythms of common speech.

According to Eliot this is so because of the dichotomy that exists between sound and meaning. A poem's sounds must make sense, or have meaning, but we do not need to apprehend this meaning before we recognise it as poetry. Sounds without meaning can be music, but in poetry they are the musical component which accompanies the meaning ('Music', 29-30). Another musical feature of poetry is its similarity to ordinary speech – "So, while poetry attempts to convey something beyond what can be conveyed in prose rhythms, it remains, all the same, one person talking to another; and this is just as true if you sing it, for singing is another way of talking" ('Music', 31). Here Eliot is identifying the musical properties of poetry which do not make the poetry analogous to music in any equivalent sense, but which are necessary elements if it is to be distinguished from prose.

There are few occasions when Eliot draws exact parallels or makes equivalences between literary and musical devices. That is not his purpose, yet this is not to say they are not hinted at. Furthermore, there is an awareness of a commonality of

thinking across the arts, even if this does not penetrate very deeply, when he claims that the poet

...must, like the sculptor, be faithful to the medium in which he works; it is out of the sounds that he has heard that he must make his melody and harmony. ('Music', 32)

The idea of structural properties common to all the arts will be taken up later in this chapter. For now it is the specific musical terms referred to in this essay which are of interest. It is useful to speculate whether Eliot was really thinking of melody and harmony as distinguishable equivalents in poetry, or whether they are terms being loosely used. There later follows an evaluation of "rhythm" as an aspect of poetry, and this seems to suggest that the primary elements of music are being equated to poetic procedures.

Of melody, Eliot says that not all poetry is "melodious", that melody is not the primary element in "the music of words" and that "dissonance" and "cacophony" are also features of poetry. This is certainly true of music. When he speaks of the beauty and ugliness of words being relative to their context, and remarks that "The music of a word is....at a point of intersection" ('Music', 32), he is surely thinking of the compositional process in music too, for one note has no more intrinsic beauty than another without the surrounding notes to give it aesthetic value. Poetry relies on context and association in similar ways to music.

Another remark resonant of musical terminology begins "Not all words, obviously, are equally rich and well-connected: it is part of the business of the poet to dispose the richer among the poorer....". Might Eliot be thinking of harmony here, and of the implied harmonic value of different notes within a melody or key, and of the hierarchical nature of the diatonic system? Unlike painting and architecture, music and literature have a finite vocabulary. Even though the number of combinations possible within that vocabulary is infinite, there are a limited number of raw materials in the form of words and notes available to the creative artist.²⁵ Consequently,

²⁵ Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is perhaps one of the few exceptions to this assumption as it experiments not only with new vocabulary, but also with new grammar and syntax.

hierarchical systems can easily evolve which assign certain functions to the different components of the vocabulary, and associations which govern the effectiveness of their use within certain contexts. There must not be too many “rich” words or the effect will be spoiled. Eliot’s musical knowledge would have been sufficient to support these insights, especially having published (and, it is assumed, absorbed) the articles in The Criterion on musical form by J.B. Trend. The claim that “it is only at certain moments that a word can be made to insinuate the whole history of a language and a civilization” also has a connection with music, not spelt out by Eliot but implied by being in the same paragraph as other remarks about music, in that certain harmonies or combinations of notes resonate across all styles of music within a particular musical tradition. This allusiveness “...is not the fashion or eccentricity of a peculiar type of poetry, but an allusiveness which is in the nature of words, and which is equally the concern of every kind of poet.” (‘Music’, 33)

It is an often-quoted remark of Eliot’s from this essay that a musical poem is a combination of sound pattern and the pattern of “the secondary meanings of the words which compose it”, but what exactly did Eliot mean by “secondary meanings”? I believe his definition is in the preceding lines and is behind his conception of melody and harmony as musical features of poetry. It is essential for Eliot that sound and meaning exist simultaneously in poetry. The “secondary meanings” are here the associations we carry with words, their other meanings in other contexts, in order that we may compare those with the meaning the author intends. For example, the word “music”, as used in Four Quartets, may have many secondary meanings for the reader, more specific or more general, meanings which are weighed against Eliot’s use of the word in lines such as “The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery” (‘Burnt Norton’, I), or “Only by the form, the pattern, / Can words or music reach / The stillness...” (‘Burnt Norton’, V), or “...music heard so deeply / That it is not heard at all, but you are the music / While the music lasts” (‘The Dry Salvages’, V). I select the word “music” as an example because it is used in many different contexts throughout the poems that make up Four Quartets, and because I feel Eliot has these poems in mind when making these remarks. The canvas is large enough for words to be repeated at different stages in the construction, and for different associations to evolve during the course of these repetitions, so that Eliot is to some extent creating his own “secondary meanings”. The importance of the associations of words ranged more widely than

associations just for the individual. For Eliot words had a richness and resonance within a community, their associations were known to everyone inside that community and were behind the growth of an entire civilization, a point made in his essay on Dante.²⁶

Another passage which suggests that Four Quartets is the model for these ideas discusses the distribution of sections of prose and poetry. The facts that “in a poem of any length, there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole”, and that “no poet can write a poem of amplitude unless he is a master of the prosaic” (‘Music’, 32) both point to Four Quartets, its extended length and focus on structure, and its alternation of passages of prose with poetry.

It is perhaps the feature of “sound” which Eliot equates with “melody” in music, and “meaning” (or “secondary meanings”) which he compares with harmony. It is possible that this lengthy paragraph on sound and meaning (‘Music’, 29-30) is an attempt at a more precise definition of the terms he set down at the end of an earlier paragraph. He also anticipates the doubt that the only purely musical attribute of poetry is the sound it makes by observing that “the sound of a poem is as much an abstraction from the poem as is the sense” (‘Music’, 33). Sound and meaning are clearly meant to have an inseparable musical function in poetry, even if this is not specifically the case in music.

The lecture then appears to move away from a consideration of the particular elements of music in poetry. There is a discussion on the influence of contemporary speech on poetry and of blank verse on drama, yet this turns out to be primarily an evaluation of rhythm. Besides melody and harmony this is the third primary element of music. After propounding a theory of the history of poetic rhythm as alternating periods of innovation or exploration with development or refinement, Eliot attempts to link the rhythms of a poem with its structure. A study of music is said to be valuable to the poet for both the “sense of rhythm and the sense of structure” (‘Music’, 38), and rhythm may have an unintentional influence on the structure of a

²⁶ See Selected, 207.

poem - “..a poem.....may tend to realize itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words....” (‘Music’, 38). This recalls the passages from other prose works cited above on the valid musical impulses in pre-conscious creative thought, and makes a case for rhythm as a primal characteristic of poetry, melody and harmony perhaps coming later in the process, able to shape the design of a poem’s ideas and images, and thus mould its structure. The closing observations on general analogies between poetry and music which follow these words take their cue from the remarks on rhythm. They also once again suggest that Eliot has a long poem in mind, specifically Four Quartets, mentioning recurrent themes, transitional passages and contrapuntal arrangement. The comparison between transitions in a poem and different movements of a symphony or quartet (‘Music’, 38) is unclear – does this mean that the different sections of a long poem are comparable to the different movements of a longer musical piece, and have the same capabilities for development, or does “transitions” mean something more specific? In music the word tends to mean a separate short section linking larger sections of the same movement or linking separate movements, whereas Eliot may have been hinting at more subtle gradations in the rhythm or tone of a section of poetry, not a passage in itself. Perhaps Eliot would still have used the word “movement” if talking solely about poetry and was indeed thinking of Four Quartets as a musical structure composed of different “movements”.

So far I have looked closely at how Eliot might have applied specific musical terms to poetry, and at one or two more abstract ideas. I will now consider how Eliot saw the role of music in the general arena of the arts. The idea that a variety of diverse elements is necessary for the achievement of a synthetic whole is a paradigm of thought found elsewhere in Eliot’s prose. His organising principle in Notes towards the Definition of Culture (1948) is that culture arises from the variety of mutual influences and exchanges within the arts. Culture is “the one thing that we cannot deliberately aim at”, but is the conjunction of various artistic activities for their own sakes.²⁷ As in his descriptions of the presence of music in poetry, Eliot again uses the word “pattern” to describe the creative interaction of various components to create new wholes – culture cannot be found in a single subject area or individual, “...we are

²⁷ T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture (London, 1948), 19. Cited as Notes hereafter.

driven in the end to find it in the pattern of the society as a whole” (Notes, 23). This notion of unity from inner diversity is, in this essay, based on the close alliance between religion and culture, and the conviction that without a common faith (this happens to be Christianity in Europe), the diverse forces within a society cannot be held together and the culture will decay and, in the end, collapse:

For without the struggle no balance can be maintained
....Christendom should be one.....But within that unity
there should be an endless conflict between ideas – for
it is only by the struggle against constantly appearing
false ideas that the truth is enlarged and clarified...

(Notes, 82)

This balance of elements within large structures becomes a model of thought for Eliot, and perhaps of construction in Four Quartets. Music is not specifically mentioned in the Notes until the Appendix section (taken from broadcast talks to Germany of 1946) when he turns to a discussion of the rhythms of English and attempts to justify a claim that it is the language “richest for the purposes of writing poetry” (Notes, 110). After citing the diversity of influences from other languages (Nordic, Germanic, Norman and Latin) as a primary reason, Eliot then focuses on their rhythms – “Each of these languages brought its own music: and the richness of the English language for poetry is first of all in its variety of metrical elements” (Notes, 111). Again music is invoked in the description of a process involving a synthesis of diverse components. Although in this case the musical attributes of the languages are only a part of that process – it is not the process itself that is described as musical – I believe that Eliot saw such interactive processes as musical ones from his persistent use of the word “pattern” in musico-literary contexts, his decision to include the musical aspect of language in a text about the meaning of culture, and his awareness of music itself as a simultaneous interaction of rhythm, melody and harmony, which in turn becomes a metaphor for the relationships between all the arts.

There are precedents for a broad outlook on the inter-relationships of different art forms in the early Modernist period which may have influenced Eliot. By developing his notion of “significant form”, Clive Bell, in his Art of 1914, sought to find qualities

common to all works of art – initially visual art, and then through some general comparisons with music. Eliot met Bell during his Garsington visits from 1916 onwards and the friendship was to last a long time. Bell is very much a formalist in his opinions on the origins of and in his definition of aesthetic beauty:

For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us
nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs,
no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from
the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic
exaltation. (Clive Bell, Art (London, 1914), 36.)

This is more in tune with the Eliot of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' of the same period, where poetry is "not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion".²⁸ By the time of 'The Music of Poetry' he seems to have moved on to a conception of art as a part of a cultural framework rather than existing in aesthetic isolation – Bell sets up an opposition between aesthetic convictions and cultural awareness which he cannot always stay on one side of. However, he reveals deep convictions about form in music, which are quite similar to Eliot's in that they proceed not from any specific knowledge, but from "an emotion which the artist has felt" (Art, 64). These are held to be instincts which, when developed, create forms which are moving – "...at moments I do appreciate music as pure musical form, as sounds combined according to the laws of a mysterious necessity, as pure art with a tremendous significance of its own and no relation whatever to the significance of life...." (Art, 41). This seems to be one aspect of Eliot's argument in Four Quartets – "Only by the form, the pattern / Can words or music reach / The stillness...", and again becomes a theme in the play The Confidential Clerk (1953), in which much of the dialogue is redolent of Four Quartets. In the play the character of Sir Claude propounds the desirability of a world in which form takes precedence over substance – "I want a world where the form is the reality, / Of which the substantial is only a shadow" – and is answered by Colby, a frustrated organist, who envisages this in terms of music.²⁹ Such emphasis on form is one possible way of looking at the creation of art, even though it is not the only way available to Eliot by the 1930's.

²⁸ T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Selected Prose ed. John Hayward (London, 1953), 30.

²⁹ T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays (London, 1969), 464.

Furthermore, the notion of the instinctive artistic emotion which Bell seems to have developed, descended from the subconscious prior to articulation in whatever language, is part of Eliot's defence of the poet's methods in the prose extracts quoted earlier from 'The Need for Poetic Drama', The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism and 'The Music of Poetry'.

The wider aesthetic background

When Joyce writes about music, it is vocal music, settings of words, which dominate the examples. References to specific composers of mainstream western music and their methods, or to particular pieces beyond single arias, popular songs or opera titles are few. Joyce's possessions also offer few musical points of focus. In the library from Joyce's Paris apartment where he lived until 1939, there is an untitled collection of sheet music collected and bound by Joyce, including a gold stamp of his initials on the cover. It is a truly eclectic sample with pieces by Grieg, Mozart, Chopin and Bach and even a group of Morris Dance tunes.³⁰ He had an interest in the Italian composer and conductor Ferruccio Busoni's work and ideas (see Chapter Three), especially in the latter's advocacy of non-traditional harmonic systems. Joyce also met Busoni and attended his concerts whilst in Zurich, and owned his book, Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst (1906). Material from his library at this time, now documented as the Trieste Library, was used as a reference source for the 'Sirens' episode of Ulysses, notably books of ballads and translations of Wagner's prose on the nature of opera. Besides Busoni's book, Joyce may also have used an Italian book on musical form in the preparation of Ulysses, Gustavo Magrini's Manuale di musica teorico-practico (Milan, 1916), which was on his shelves in Zurich.³¹ Conversations in Zurich with the composer Otto Luening document an interest in Schoenberg as a composer of lasting music which would come to be seen as great in time, and parallels

³⁰ See Thomas E. Connolly, James Joyce's Books, Portraits, Manuscripts, Notebooks, Typescripts, Page Proofs (New York: 1997), 73-4.

³¹ There is a comprehensive discussion of Joyce's Trieste Library and its role in Ulysses in Michael Patrick Gillespie, Inverted Volumes Improperly Arranged. James Joyce and His Trieste Library (Ann Arbor, 1983).

between Schoenberg's musical methods and Joyce's prose will be examined in the section on analogies in Chapter Three.

Other than these references, which are at times little more than name-dropping, there is little in Joyce's letters and non-fiction prose to compare with Eliot's frequent, and sometimes considered elucidations of the musical function of words. To assess more fully the reasons for Joyce's complete absorption by music in his prose fiction works, it is necessary to look more widely at the contemporary aesthetic of inter-relationships between the arts, as well as the works themselves. One critic has argued that this aesthetic reaches widely enough to admit parallels between Joyce and painting, and specifically Vuillard, even though the writer showed no aptitude for visual art.³² Besides the fact that Eliot and Joyce responded to the emotional appeal of music and had musical interests independent of literary connections, especially Joyce in the performance of song, the pull that music exerted over their professional careers as critics and creators of literature was a force that resonated throughout the Modernist period and beyond, and influenced many other creative artists.

One of the reasons for non-musicians' interest in music was a general interest in language as a structural model. Language, and its separation into different linguistic functions and component parts, came to be a formal model for other non-verbal art forms, and thus music, or painting, might be seen as another system of language, employing a grammar, a vocabulary, and syntactical rules of use. This is certainly a view of the factors influencing the production of art which encourages inter-disciplinary discussion and comparison, as the values common to a period may become part of a single discourse with elements that are comparable across the arts in terms of structural principle, narrative, units of meaning and sequence of thought. It was a conviction of the French Symbolist poets that all art aspires to the condition of music, being the purest art form without reference to a literal world of meanings, colours or forms outside it. Much of the interest in music in Modernist writers' work stems from what was perceived at this time as the crisis of language and the need to escape into another, purer medium, without the distraction of secondary meanings. In

³² Morton P. Levitt, in 'Joyce and Vuillard: "The Music of Painting"', *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol.30, 3 (Spring 1993), 379-92, argues that despite the lack of analogues with Joyce in art, there is a similarity between Vuillard and Joyce's relationship of life to art, and parallels in their responses to developments in Modernist thought.

a collection of observations from various sources under the title 'Crise de Vers', published in Divagations in 1897, Mallarmé wrote that "Literature is now experiencing an exquisite and fundamental crisis".³³ The essay is characterised throughout by a blending of the inevitability of important change in creative procedures and a sense of pleasant submission to that change. Established traditions are seen to be disintegrating but the "rules" of poetry are not being wholly abandoned, but rather infringed. Mallarmé embraces the language of musical terminology to express these ideas, for the fundamental changes in poetry that he is discussing not only relate directly to matters of sound, rhythm and phrase-length, but may also be explained more easily by comparison with another discipline. He writes:

...anyone with an individual technique and ear
can build his own instrument once he is able
skilfully to blow, pluck or strike it; it can be
played along with others and dedicated to
Language.

For now we unquestionably hear sunshine as
rays of light penetrate the meanderings of
gilded melody: for Music since Wagner has
combined with Verse to form Poetry.

...words lose their meaning in the darkened
realm of sound.³⁴

Mallarmé recognises a temptation for the poet to capitulate to sheer sound for its own sake, such as G.M. Hopkins does, a temptation shared in music by Debussy, for whom the importance of traditional harmonic sequences was weakened by a fascination for orchestral colour. However, Mallarmé recognises that art can never be pure sound alone and pleads equally for the intellectual content of music: "For Music must undeniably result from the full power of the intellectual word, not from the elemental sounds of strings, brass and woodwind: it must be a full, manifest totality of

³³ Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Crise de Vers' in Oeuvres complètes ed. Mondor and Jean-Aubry (Paris, 1945). Translated by T.G. West in Symbolism. An Anthology ed. and translated by T.G. West (London, 1980), 2. Anthology cited as Symbolism hereafter.

³⁴ Symbolism, 5 and 7.

relationships.”³⁵ Although Mallarmé was not considered a typically “musical” poet in the 1880’s and 1890’s in the sense that Verlaine was, his interest in a connection between the two arts has great significance. A comparison with Eduard Hanslick’s The Beautiful in Music (1854) reveals an earlier aesthetic inflexibility towards the notion that music and words are in any way compatible. Having pronounced that the beautiful in music is unconnected with words or “any subject introduced from without...”, that “it consists wholly of sounds artistically combined”, Hanslick isolates sound in music as its sole concern – “the end, that is, the ultimate and absolute object in view”.³⁶ Any “modern” experiments in music which attempt to imitate speech are dismissed as disruptive and thoroughly alien to that art.

With Symbolism, the influences seem to be in one direction only, the effects of music on poetry, whereby the musical method is the apex and essence of artistic expression. With Modernism, attitudes towards music become less reverent and the influences are shared. There is music in speech just as there is speech in music. Both Eliot and Joyce saw the value of music as an abstract language in the search for further limits to the boundaries of poetry and prose, respectively. Once music was accepted as more than mere pictorial representation in sound, and could become a vehicle for the articulation of ideas and feelings through abstract structures and narratives, its procedures, or at the very least, references to these procedures, could be used in literature to challenge the boundaries of verbal expression. Some of these procedures will be examined in the next two chapters. Furthermore, a work of art could evolve its own rules of composition and its own logic, resisting the need to satisfy criteria external to the language it is made up of. Once a series of techniques was assimilated, techniques which could be “translated” across the arts, such as non-linearity, juxtaposition, distorted “syntax” and synchronic patterns rather than chronological ones, the creative artist was able to move more freely within new revolutionary methods. This did not necessarily mean the same artist working in different disciplines but enabled the artist working in one medium to invoke the qualities of others. Arthur Symons’ comments on Mallarmé’s Un Coup de Dés recall Clive Bell’s formalist attitude to the painter’s art, but with greater stress on the elements of structure which are consciously conceived:

³⁵ Symbolism, 9-10.

³⁶ Eduard Hanslick, The Beautiful in Music translated by Gustav Cohen (London, 1891), 66 and 94.

Mallarmé was concerned that nothing in the poem be the effect of mere chance, that the articulation of every part with every other part should be complete, each part implying every other part, and that the meaning of the poem should be inseparable from its formal structure.³⁷

Although they were revolutionary writers in terms of style and structure, Eliot and Joyce both for some time used the Modernist attitude to the notion of self as part of a quest for something impersonal. Eliot especially avoided the Freudian psychoanalytical enquiries into the depths of the self which preoccupied French Symbolist poets, pursuing instead, especially in the early poems up to and including The Waste Land, the significance of the individual's varying point of view, and the notion that no single point of view represented a finished product. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' presents the notion of many selves stemming from a single consciousness. The 'Preludes' poems feature parts of the body divorced from their owners and have them perform automatic actions *en masse*, again altering the point of view. The young Stephen Dedalus in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is an embodiment of the division of self into more than one entity, made up of many voices and potential identities and personae, convincingly articulated through an adolescent mind. The idea of shifting viewpoint is also something much exploited in Ulysses – notably in the 'Wandering Rocks' episode – and could also be applied to contemporary painting. Cézanne's series paintings provide one example, of a single subject seen from different points in separate pictures, and there are others in the work of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, whose Nollendorfplatz (1912) is a literal illustration of multiple points of view within a single picture. The painting is representative of his interest in the shapes of city-life, occasioned by the atmosphere of Berlin in the 1910's, then the third largest city in Europe. Trams and streets radiate in all directions creating angles impossible to view from a single position, the overall effect similar to a convex image reflected in a prism. Other Kirchner paintings from this time,

³⁷ Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (London, 1899), 108. It was Symons who introduced Eliot to the poetry of Jules Laforgue, a significant influence on the technique of his earlier poetry.

especially of high-wire acts at the circus, demonstrate his interest in multiple views apprehended simultaneously, a kind of polyphonic visual art where a single theme “plays” transformations of itself which “sound” together.

Kirchner was not without literary connections. The novelist Alfred Döblin involved him in the journal Der Sturm, Kirchner providing the illustrations for his novella Das Stiftsfräulein und der Tod (1913). Döblin’s most celebrated work, the city novel Berlin Alexanderplatz, experiments in similar ways with a narrative technique that foregrounds spatial arrangement and simultaneity. Published in 1929, there are many echoes of Ulysses, perhaps primarily in its inclusiveness as a novel which attempts to chronicle in minute detail the movements of characters and events in the city of Berlin. Voices are super-imposed, leitmotifs are in evidence and the montage or collage method, so termed by Walter Benjamin, indicates Döblin’s interest in crossing genre borders – the effects of film, art and the press on literature were acknowledged by him in his critical prose and in a review of Ulysses.³⁸ David Dollenmayer’s analysis of one of the chapters in the novel’s first book, in which the Berlin street plan dictates the narrative method as roads radiate from a nodal point and different activities are described as occurring together, recalls both Kirchner’s painting and Joyce’s ‘Wandering Rocks’ (though without the latter’s focus on the same event described from varying perspectives).³⁹

However, these methods tend to be concerned with spatial arrangement, which will shortly be discussed in more detail. Issues of self connect with attitudes to the past and in their interest and use of the styles of the past, typically in The Waste Land and Ulysses, Eliot and Joyce are essentially rejecting the self. There is a turning away from individual expression to a presentation of a narrative detached from personal involvement. This was also a tactic adopted by musicians who sought to avoid the excesses of Expressionism and found a dissociation from self in evoking the music of the past. This is taken up by Leonard B. Meyer in his discussion of Eliot and Stravinsky as examples of the point he is making – “...if earlier styles and materials are employed in contemporary art, music, and literature, it will most likely be done by

³⁸ See Alfred Döblin, Aufsätze zur Literatur (Olten, 1963), 288.

³⁹ See David B. Dollenmayer, The Berlin Novels of Alfred Döblin (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), 70. Similarities are also found with the method of the ‘Penelope’ episode of Ulysses (see p.85-6).

those inclined towards formalism, rather than by those who still consider works of art to be vehicles for personal expression”.⁴⁰

One writer about Modernist attitudes to form across the arts to mention both Eliot and Joyce is Joseph Frank in his essay on spatial form in literature.⁴¹ Although music is not mentioned specifically here, the ideas are easily applied to the contemporary musical aesthetic. Frank looks at how the notion of form evolved in Modernist poetry and in the novel, and introduces the idea of “spatial form”, by which material traditionally presented in a linear fashion, as part of a sequence, is now juxtaposed as clusters without logical connections between them. Instead of reading sequentially, “the reader is intended to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence.”⁴² According to Frank, meaning comes to be dictated by the spatial qualities of the writing and not the order in which material appears on the page. The Waste Land is said to lack a syntactical sequence and instead favours “a structure depending on the perception of relationships between disconnected word-groups. To be properly understood, these word-groups must be juxtaposed with one another and perceived simultaneously”.⁴³ Although Frank recommends that a reader should read as a musician listens, to groups of recurring phrases, it is this quality of simultaneity which is problematic for the reader of words on the page, but easier for the listener to music. A reader may look back over previous material but he cannot perceive “simultaneously” in the way that a listener may hear several notes, rhythms, chords, melodies or ideas at once. Conversely, this facility of looking back over the printed page is one denied to the listener (unless he is “reading” the score, and thus at one remove from the music proper), and these different methods of perception must be considered when comparing literature and music.

It is predictable that Frank cites The Waste Land and Ulysses as examples of Eliot and Joyce using “spatial form”. This approach is an easier narrative method in the novel, he claims, as there is only a temporary break-up in the sequence within a much larger unit. It is suggested that Joyce intends to present a complete picture of the

⁴⁰ Leonard B. Meyer, Music, the Arts and Ideas (Chicago, 1967), 191.

⁴¹ Joseph Frank, ‘Spatial Form in Modern Literature’ in Mark Schorer, J.Miles and G. McKenzie ed., Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgement (New York, 1958), 379-92. Cited as Frank hereafter.

⁴² Frank, 381.

⁴³ Ibid. 383.

“sights and sounds” of Dublin by giving the reader thousands of connections to make regarding time, character and place before the novel makes sense. Doubtless Joyce was fascinated by the verisimilitude of the material but the method of the novel suggests that Joyce intends the reader to attempt to perceive how that complete picture *might* be achieved – after all, the reader is not necessarily interested in this aspect to the same degree as Joyce. Regardless of intention, the method still involves juxtaposition and it is this which Frank sees as the primary literary technique in The Waste Land, and a procedure also used by painters. A particularly interesting example is given on painting, which may also be extended to music. Frank’s literary parallel with Impressionist painters is that the artists “juxtaposed pure tones on the canvas, instead of mixing them on the palette, in order to leave the blending of colors to the eye of the spectator”.⁴⁴ This is redolent of the way in which Debussy, and later composers of the Second Viennese School, purposely omitted traditional links in the chain of harmonic narratives, leaving the listener to make the connections. A piece such as Debussy’s Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune (1892-94) is an early exploration of tonal ambiguity and atonal effects achieved by a number of effects: the omission of harmonic resolutions, the patterning of the harmony around the dissonant interval of the tritone (thereby suggesting dissonance without being overtly dissonant), and the use of silent pauses. These are all alternative, non-sequential ways of presenting material, which suggest rather than tell, and share the same intention and effects as subsequent literary works. It is perhaps more than coincidental that Debussy’s piece owes in its construction a significant debt to the poem that inspired it. This is surely a late example of an idea among Romantic musicians that music could translate literature into sound, begun by Berlioz’s Shakespearian pieces, and continuing to develop into the symphonic poem. Although no words are set in Prélude, and although Debussy himself glossed over the links between the two in a letter of 1895, the deliberate ambiguities between fantasy and reality in Mallarmé’s poem are reproduced in the music, the arch-form of the piece mirrors the original poem’s five-part structure, and even the use of pauses in the music coincides with the frequent white spaces on the pages of the poem.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Frank, 387.

⁴⁵ Debussy claimed of the piece, “...c’est l’impression générale du poème”. See letter of October 10, 1895 to Henry Gautier-Villars, in Léon Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Français translated by Maire O’Brien (New York, 1967), 181-2.

One of Debussy's ideas for music of the future was for a type of music written specially to be performed outdoors, which would involve adapting certain technical procedures – some harmonic progressions, for example - to an open-air acoustic. Thus there would be a difference in sound between music performed in the concert hall and music performed outdoors. This leads Debussy to a literary analogy – “Finally, one would be able to verify once and for all whether music and poetry are the only arts which move in space...”.⁴⁶ Despite his penchant for innovative attitudes towards composition, Debussy was firmly opposed to any theory or formula of composition which obstructed the freedom to express imagination. He preferred the reasons for the creation of music to remain mysterious and describes the act of composing rather in the way Eliot conceives of the pre-conscious origins of musical poetry:

The sound of the sea, the curve of the horizon, the
wind in the leaves, the cry of a bird – all these arouse
in us a number of impressions. Then all of a sudden
without willing it in any way, one of these recollections
assumes an outward form and expresses itself in musical
terms, clothed in its own harmony, which could never be
improved however hard one might try.⁴⁷

Besides the literary influences on Debussy, there were also artistic ones, for his view of musical inspiration was firmly founded on the mind's reaction to images from the natural world. The composer's conception of his Nocturnes for orchestra was colouristic, a factor which made it difficult for him to notate what was in his mind. Wishing to depart from the conventional nineteenth-century musical form of a nocturne, Debussy looked to the paintings of the same name by James Mc Neill Whistler for “...all the various impressions and the special effects of light that the word suggests”.⁴⁸ From the opposite viewpoint, two contemporary painters who showed an interest in musical parallels to their work were Henri Matisse and Wassily Kandinsky. Matisse conceived of the experiments he made in art as musical because

⁴⁶ From *Le Gil Blas*, 19 January, 1903. Quoted in Stefan Jarocinski, Debussy. Impressionism and Symbolism translated by Rollo Myers (London, 1976), 108. Cited as Jarocinski hereafter.

⁴⁷ From ‘Est-ce une renaissance de la musique religieuse?’, Excelsior, (11 February, 1911). Quoted in Jarocinski, 96.

⁴⁸ Translated by Maire and Grace O'Brien and quoted in Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy (London, 1936), 189.

of the element of simultaneity – “From the relationship I have found in all the tones there must result a living harmony of colours, a harmony analogous to that of a musical composition.”⁴⁹ Christopher Butler, in his study of early Modernism, sees the analogy as one with chords in music, the movement of blocks of colour across the canvas paralleling the range of harmonies a composer uses in a piece of music.⁵⁰ Because painting had to escape from representational forms in a way that was unnecessary in music, for it is already essentially an abstract art form, colour became one element with which to achieve this. However, an analogy between colour in painting and harmony in music proves a little ironic at a time when the most experimental composers were seeking to replace a traditional (diatonic) harmonic system with alternative harmonic systems. This need not invalidate the analogy, however, as the principle of harmony – notes sounding together, whether they produce concords or discords – remains the same.

Kandinsky, in his manifesto-like document, On the Spiritual in Art, written in 1910 and read enthusiastically by Schoenberg, drew a parallel between the interaction of the artist with a painting and the pianist with his instrument – “Colour is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer, while the soul is a piano of many strings. The artist is the hand through which the medium of different keys causes the human soul to vibrate.”⁵¹ This is one of many references to music and to musicians – Wagner, Debussy and Schoenberg are discussed, the latter acknowledged to be the greatest innovator as he “advocates full renunciation of conventional beauty sacrilegiously, while accepting all those means leading to unconventional self expression”.⁵² Whilst it is pointed out that even Schoenberg’s radical new freedoms are conditional on certain artistic boundaries, his music nevertheless, “leads us into a new realm where the musical experiences are not acoustic but purely soul inspiring. Here begins “the music of the future””.⁵³ The fact that the music is not just “acoustic” is important as this narrows the divide between it and the other arts. Kandinsky is probably hinting at structural effects which may be common to procedures in painting, and is already noticing this at a very early stage (1910) in Schoenberg’s experimental period with atonality.

⁴⁹ Henri Matisse, ‘Notes of a Painter’ (1908) in Jack D. Flam ed., Matisse on Art (London, 1973), 37.

⁵⁰ See Christopher Butler, Early Modernism (Oxford, 1994), 35-7. Cited as Butler hereafter.

⁵¹ Wassily Kandinsky, On the Spiritual in Art ed. Hilla Rebay (New York, 1946), 43. Cited as Spiritual hereafter.

⁵² Spiritual, 30.

⁵³ Ibid. 31.

Kandinsky also uses the word “symphonic” in writing about art, to mean both the idea of simply “sounding together”, simultaneously, and to suggest something abstracted from worldly forms. He distinguished between two types of art composition, “melodic” and “symphonic”. The first he called “simple” and the second “complex”, “...consisting of various forms, subjected more or less completely to a principle form”.⁵⁴ This analogy, and further parallels with musical devices such as the “fermata”, or pause in music, and with particular compositions, such as choral works by Mozart and Beethoven, are seen as historic parallels throughout the development of art and music. Once it is acknowledged that different art forms share a grammar necessary in the creation of their products, the dissolution or replacement of that grammar by a substitute system may also be admitted.

A perceivable trend in painting towards abstraction from material ties naturally generated allusions to music, the most abstract of the arts. Butler quotes a letter from a painter friend of Kandinsky in which his reactions to hearing pieces of Arnold Schoenberg’s music are compared to the effects of Kandinsky’s painting Composition.⁵⁵ The main point of comparison is that a traditional system of expression has been suspended in these works, tonality in music and the tonality of colour in art. Whilst it is unfortunate that the same word is used to describe differing phenomena from different disciplines, the essential idea is that the hierarchical order which formerly governed the use of tones of colour and tones of sound has been dissolved, and with it “the European laws of art and harmony”.⁵⁶ Interestingly, the music and art of the Orient are mentioned in this letter, as an alternative structural aesthetic, and these ideas will be considered in Chapter Three in relation to T.S. Eliot and musical thought.

Turning more specifically to music, the compositions of Schoenberg’s early experimental stage lend themselves to comfortable comparison with the more abstract procedures of early Modernist art and literature. Like Mallarmé, he felt that

⁵⁴ Wassily Kandinsky, The Art of Spiritual Harmony translated by M.T.H. Sadler (London, 1914), 109.

⁵⁵ Letter from Franz Marc of 14 Jan. 1911 in Jelena Hahl-Koch ed., Arnold Schoenberg. Wassily Kandinsky. Letters, Pictures and Documents (London, 1984), 136-7. Cited as Hahl-Koch hereafter.

⁵⁶ Hahl-Koch, 137.

fundamental changes to the methods of artistic expression were inevitable, rather than being the fruits of rebellion –

...I knew that I had the duty of developing my
ideas for the sake of progress in music, whether
I liked it or not.

I was never a *revolutionary*.⁵⁷

A constant barrier to radical change in the tonality of Western music had been the idea that the diatonic system was God-given and a law of nature. Writers on music such as Eduard Hanslick reinforced this by citing what they believed to be primordial laws of harmony, and of the human perception of sound, as aesthetic rules. In the words of Charles Rosen, Schoenberg was accused of “violating the natural laws of music, of substituting a purely artificial system for one that had been handed down to be used along with the laws of physics.”⁵⁸ Such changes to the “grammar” of early twentieth-century music are, however, frequently in line with its subject matter. A piece such as *Erwartung* (1909) explores a range of extreme and ambiguous emotions, and this marriage of style with content is also found in contemporary poetry and prose.

Threats to the stability of tonal music, however, were felt long before Schoenberg unveiled his twelve-tone or serial method of composition in 1923. Before this came a period, of around twelve years, of what came to be termed as free atonality, during which Schoenberg produced *Erwartung*, the Second String Quartet (which included settings of Stefan George’s poetry), and the Three Piano Pieces, Opus 11 – all of which were revolutionary in effect, if not in intention. Prior to these years, music was written whose tonal foundations were only gently rumbled – they still remained in a recognisable “home” key. Debussy’s *Prélude*, discussed earlier, is a suitable example of this. Schoenberg extended the experiments Debussy made with what Joseph Frank would term “spatial form” in his own settings of poetry. The song cycle *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, a setting of Stefan George, mirrors the suggestiveness of the words

⁵⁷ Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea. Selected writings of Arnold Schoenberg* ed. Leonard Stein, translated by Leo Black (London, 1975), 53 and 137. Cited as *Style and Idea* hereafter.

⁵⁸ Charles Rosen, *Schoenberg* (London, 1975), 15. Cited as Rosen hereafter.

in the music. The details of the exotic garden paradise are only gradually introduced through the use of synecdoche in George's poems, whereby a part represents the whole, and Schoenberg translates these effects into music with devices such as omitting clear cadences and using isolated chords with no harmonic context. The gardens are an ambiguous place, their sensuality can turn from the paradisaical to the destructive, and the chords used, at times suggesting traditional harmony, yet unrelated to a tonal framework, mimic this sense of relativity and uncertainty.⁵⁹

Schoenberg's text for Erwartung, by Marie Pappenheim, a medical student, resembles in its fragmentary ejaculations the kind of "stream of consciousness" writing emerging in contemporary literature. This is mimicked by the music of the piece, in which short motifs are left undeveloped and there is a notable lack of repetition – one of the fundamental tools in the advancement of narrative in conventional musical structures.

Despite the radical sounds of much of the later serial music, Schoenberg's intentions behind the theories were not those of an iconoclast, but depended on extending the traditions of the past. Schoenberg wished to maintain some of the stability of eighteenth-century Viennese music by creating a new, "democratic", system in the twelve-note row. Instead of the composer abandoning tonality altogether, one system was being exchanged for another, the diatonic for the serial, and once this had been achieved new units of meaning could be constructed out of the techniques of serial harmony. Charles Rosen sees these changes as linguistic transformations:

The renunciation of the symmetrical use of blocks of elements in working out musical proportions placed the weight on the smallest units, single intervals, short motifs. The expressive values of these tiny elements therefore took on an inordinate significance; they replaced syntax.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ For a full account of George's poems and Schoenberg's music see David Michael Hertz, The Tuning of the Word. The Musico-Literary Poetics of the Symbolist Movement (Carbondale, 1987), 134-66.

⁶⁰ Rosen, 29.

Schoenberg's firm harnessing of tradition in the quest for a replacement set of musical conventions is to some extent congruent with Eliot's defence of literary tradition as accomplice in the search for new forms in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'.

Similarly, Schoenberg's gradual abandonment of the logical connectors between musical chords and his erosion of the hierarchical distinctions between harmonies find a counterpart in Eliot's patterning of images into clusters, seemingly without logical connections, in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and other early poems.

Juxtaposition is the technique common to both art forms here. This, of course, reaches its supreme form of expression in The Waste Land. Joyce also perfects this technique in Ulysses, the entire novel being based around the reader's ability to make connections from clues laid down by the author. These experiments are already under development in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

Schoenberg echoes another attitude to composition common to Eliot, Kandinsky and Clive Bell in his own Style and Idea, in a passage on the setting of words in lieder.

After reading the poems of some Schubert songs, he found his response to the music had not changed. His first musical reaction to the words was an instinctive and unconscious one, not analytical, being affected by the sounds of the words prior to noticing their meaning – "So I had completely understood the Schubert songs, together with their poems, from the music alone, and the poems of Stefan George from their sound alone, with a perfection that by analysis and synthesis could hardly have been attained, but certainly not surpassed."⁶¹ Schoenberg's comments on literature (Karl Kraus) and painting (Kokoschka and Kandinsky) in this section of the book, recognising the use of form and colour as musical, suggest that each creative artist faces similar compositional choices in whatever medium.

Interestingly, Christopher Butler sees a problem with the purity of Schoenberg's experimental technique in the Second String Quartet (1908), in which, unprecedented in this musical genre, a soprano vocal line is added to the four stringed instruments in its fourth movement, singing words from Stefan George's poem, Entrückung. According to Butler, the syntax and continuity present in the words of the spoken language have diluted the release from traditional harmonic language in the music,

⁶¹ Style and Idea, 144.

leading the listener down a similar trail of sequential thinking. However, this need not distract the listener from the musical argument, which can still operate on its own terms, but may rather act as a bridge for the listener unfamiliar with music that is not “signposted”. This is especially so here as the words of the poem are concerned with the idea of an escape from earthly ties to the air of a new planet – “Ich fühle Luft von anderen Planeten” - the kind of radical remove from the familiar that Schoenberg was seeking in the twelve-tone system under development.

The parallels that exist between radical modes of expression in Modernist literature and music, in which there was a dissolution of conventions or attitudes previously held to be fundamental laws of human perception, are counterbalanced by the awareness and respect that the artists concerned had for literary and musical traditions. Without this foundation they may not have earned the respect they themselves bestowed on their antecedents. In literature, and especially with Eliot and Joyce, this recognition of the past applies notably to stylistic inheritance. Although each writer’s output progresses differently, Eliot becoming less radical and Joyce increasingly so, both use the styles of the past to evolve a personal voice. Both The Waste Land and Ulysses are transitional stages in a journey towards stylistic independence, resolving in Four Quartets and Finnegans Wake, themselves stylistic opposites but equivalent as points of culmination. The path of Schoenberg’s career is similar to Joyce’s as each new work becomes increasingly more radical in expression, to the point of virtually inventing the tools of a new language – the conventions of the sentence and the diatonic scale have been abandoned. The route taken by Eliot is more akin to the musical career of Stravinsky – although close parallels are to be avoided – in that a central period of radicalism was later tempered, and in both artists’ kaleidoscopic patterning of their works with fragments of past cultures. However, both Schoenberg and Stravinsky had strong links with the past, the former especially seeking a continuation of the contrapuntal traditions of Bach. Despite using the twelve-tone method, other aspects of Schoenberg’s musical form – phrase-lengths, repetition, use of sequences, the use of forms such as sonata and theme and variations – draw heavily on musical tradition. Whether or not these composers were later influenced by the ideas of Formalism, which particularly accentuated form and technique and which may have influenced writers such as Döblin in the use of

montage, it seems likely that an earlier aesthetic which had recourse to the formal rigours of the past may have shaped some of the theory behind this critical school.

Myth

Another theme common to both Eliot and Joyce, which linked them to the wider artistic world, was their interest in myth. The Waste Land and Ulysses are both works in which a high proportion of disparate material is unified by stories from mythology. Myth, it seems, provided an alternative way of responding to problems of language and of history, as well as an organising device. Besides its literary use in Eliot, Joyce, and also Thomas Mann, myth was also a tool available to musicians, notably Wagner and Stravinsky, with which to pattern large structures. Used as a symbolic discourse, it was able to replace the symbols of conventional language, which artists had come to mistrust or had become impatient with. It is also representative of a timeless world in which types or stock characters and ideas symbolise actions which recur eternally. The repetition of history and notion of the timeless within transience is certainly a persistent theme in Eliot's work:

We do not know very much of the future
Except that from generation to generation
The same things happen again and again.⁶²

A method of organisation which employed myth enabled the present world, which had come to be seen as fragmented and discontinuous, to be seen from another angle which would restore the absent unity. Myth demonstrates the continuity between past and present as well as the parallels between them, and was seen, by Eliot especially, as compensation for the shortcomings of contemporary society – “It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, or giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history”.⁶³ Eliot was writing this with reference to Joyce's method in Ulysses, which he saw as a precedent for future writing, prefigured in the work of Yeats. It was clearly meant to replace narrative:

Instead of the narrative method, we may now use the

⁶² T.S. Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral (London, 1935), 24.

⁶³ T.S. Eliot, 'Ulysses, Order and Myth', The Dial vol. 75, 5 (November 1923), 480-3, (483). This article cited as Dial hereafter.

mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art.⁶⁴

Eliot's literary use of myth also reflects developments in contemporary psychology, especially work by Freud and Jung on the idea of a collective unconscious. A myth of sacrifice, resurrection and reunification becomes the single organising principle in The Waste Land and, as such, is a prefiguration of his ideal of community and the dominant role that the Church had in this. These ideals become major themes in post-conversion works such as The Rock (1934), The Idea of a Christian Society (1939) and, already discussed, Notes towards the Definition of Culture (1948). It might be tenuous to claim that Joyce and Eliot's and other writers' use of myth is a manifestation of music, so I will not dwell on the theme, but in Eliot's case it is an idea that plays a similar role of unification through the simultaneous embodiment of various qualities. The search for unity in structural method was something Eliot had also observed in Dante, who had not used myth but allegory in the Divina Commedia. This is described by Eliot as "...a universal European method" for its time.⁶⁵ Good allegorical writing was for Eliot a key to enjoying poetry before needing to understand its meaning, so there is reason to assume he found a similar use for myth in Joyce's writing. Joyce's use of myth in Ulysses was also for Eliot a solution to the need for larger forms in the novel, which would break accepted boundaries. Eliot claimed in 1923 that Portrait was Joyce's *only* novel and his remarks on the method of Ulysses show that form may be as restrictive as it is important:

If it is not a novel, that is simply because the novel is a form which will no longer serve; it is because the novel, instead of being a form, was simply the expression of an age which had not sufficiently lost all form to feel the need of something stricter.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Dial, 483.

⁶⁵ Selected, 210.

⁶⁶ Dial, 482.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the general arena of Modernist thought in which music and literature co-existed and were mutual influences. It has been seen that the aesthetic embraced other disciplines of creative thought besides music and these will also be addressed at various points in subsequent chapters. However, I have dwelt at some length with these in this chapter to suggest the sheer variety of experimentation and innovation making up the aesthetic backdrop to Eliot's and Joyce's working lives. From the writings of artists from many different disciplines, it can be seen that thinking beyond the tools and ideas of one's own trade becomes a desirable and almost necessary practice. Such a notion of the acceptability of integrated thought is also valuable for future discussion. In admitting painting into the general argument I seek not to develop this analogy further but merely to demonstrate the validity of a wide field of enquiry. This is, in any case, a different kind of analogy, for whilst pictures can contain narrative elements, it is more of a challenge to find sound in them to the degree that visual elements can be found in music. There are perhaps more visuals in music, colours and images, because there are no other non-aesthetic associations within that medium.

What has also been seen is the prominence of abstract thought and the importance of form in both Eliot and Joyce's work, qualities which greatly assist their readers in making connections with non-literary equivalents. The particular musical aspects of Eliot and Joyce's backgrounds have also been looked at in this chapter, together with the prose writing of Eliot on music. All this material builds the foundations for a more detailed examination in the next two chapters of the specific ways in which each writer was influenced by and used music in their work.

SOUNDS AND STRUCTURES

In this chapter I would like to examine the more technical aspects of how a musical language was applied to a verbal one by both Eliot and Joyce. The following chapter will deal with analogies between passages of writing and particular pieces of music or composers.

There are many ways in which a writer may apply musical techniques to poetry or prose. With regard to Eliot and Joyce these methods will be divided into two main areas: the use of sound and musical effects, and the use of musical structures. Since there is the possibility for the overlapping of material, especially from the latter category, into the following chapter concerning analogies – a writer's use of a musical form may be like one particular composer's use of that form in one particular piece, for example – I shall in this chapter attempt to keep to sonic and structural elements of music in the abstract, without reference to specific pieces where possible. If examples are given, they are mostly to clarify the point being made, rather than being used as parallels. I shall discuss each aspect of musical technique with reference to both Eliot and Joyce.

Sounds and effects: Joyce

In this first section I shall examine attempted verbal imitations of sound as well as music, and of musical effects or devices which cannot be classed as structural elements, such as chords, dissonances or trills. I shall also consider references made by Eliot and Joyce to these and to composers and pieces where they are of significance.

The physical sounds that musical instruments or the human voice make when producing music, or even just sustained pitches, are a recurrent feature in Joyce's prose. His predecessor, in terms of an author who made words more *physically* musical, might have been Gerard Manley Hopkins. Although Hopkins was writing

poetry, his The Wreck of the Deutschland was an attempt to musicalise the word by exposing the stresses in the language, rather than the syllables, creating rhythms that resembled Old English poetry. In Joyce, this legacy is felt most strongly in the poetic prose of Finnegans Wake, as elsewhere the presence of sounds takes many forms. These may occur either as direct imitations of sound, in the form of invented spellings for particular sounds, or as descriptions, suggestions or references to sounds or songs. Both Ulysses and Finnegans Wake are crammed with such material, and there are also instances in earlier prose. Sound is very much a feature of Joyce's two significant volumes of poetry, Chamber Music (1907) and Pomes Penyeach (1937), a few examples of which will be discussed before focusing on the prose works. The sound of human speech is just as much a part of this interest as musical sound. Joyce's composer friend in Zurich, Otto Luening, who worked with him in a group called the English Players, has recalled how accurate Joyce was at imitating accents, trying to teach actors to overcome their natural accents for parts in the various dramas.

The first five poems of Chamber Music show the extent to which Joyce had the lyrical simplicity of music and its physical presence in mind. The music is unavoidable as it emerges from the sounds of nature. The first poem, 'Strings in the earth and air', toys with the idea that music comes naturally from elemental sources, as strings make music in earth, air and by the river, and wanders wherever love is. Anything human, head or fingers, is drawn magnetically to the sound and engages with it almost involuntarily – 'With head to the music bent, / And fingers straying / Upon an instrument'. Music is involved with colour in the next poem, specifically the colours of nature, as amethyst, dark blue and green from sky and trees are contrasted with the yellow keys of the piano, as if the wandering hands on the instrument are following the colours of nature. The next poem, 'At that hour', introduces a harp as a symbol this time of music suggested by the emotions and manifested in nature. The harp is in dialogue with the night wind, possibly in an opposition between heaven and earth, and hints that the music as sound is created by nature, by the action of the wind upon the strings of the harp. The fourth and fifth poems feature song and singers, the latter constructed in a simple song-like form. In the space of just five short lyrics there have been references to the vocal forms song, air, chant and antiphon besides specific and implied instruments. The progression from the music of the earth through specific instruments, piano and harp, to the human voice is significant as it suggests that

music, like love, begins as an unconscious presence prior to articulation in words. Interestingly, Joyce mentions in a later poem two other vocal forms, the 'vilanelle' and 'roundelay' (no. 33), both of which exist as literary and musical forms.

Besides evoking the dawning of young love through the sounds of music, Joyce also uses them to create humour, desolation and terror. 'Thou leanest to the shell of night' plays indirectly with the idea of the sounds of the chamber pot (another layer of meaning implied by the title of the cycle) against other imagined sounds of nature. In 'All day I hear the noise of waters' the desolate sounds of the solitary seabird over an expanse of sea are vividly evoked in the reader's inner ear by the doleful chime of the words "moan", "alone" and "Monotone", and of single "o" sounds in the next stanza. Together with the two strong stresses which these lines carry, against the three or four of the alternating lines, an effect of emptiness is created by the predominating vowel sounds as well as their onomatopoeic connections with the howl of the wind and the cry of the gulls. The final poem uses the words which describe sound in such combinations with other words as to enact the drama of what is being described at a sonic level. A similar process is at work in one of the poems from Pomes Penyeach, 'A Memory of the Players in a Mirror at Midnight'. In the Chamber Music poem there is already colour by association of words such as "charging", "plunging", "fluttering", "moan", "whirling" and "clanging" with their known meanings. To this Joyce adds combinations such as "whirling laughter", "cleave the gloom" and "shouting by the shore" as well as repetitions of "They [verb]..." to ensure that the reader's experience of terror at the advancing horses of the mind is generated primarily by aural means.

Whilst it is the job of any good poet to evoke sounds in the mind of their reader, Joyce is able almost to write his own music to these words by simple but crafted arrangement so that the overall impression is of poems as songs about sensual experience, rather than narratives about particular persons or events. This seems to be form above content at its simplest and most artless in Joyce. What follows in the prose is a more conscious exploration of an unconscious phenomenon, the extent to which music is rooted in the mind from an earlier stage of existence than that from which language, and therefore literature, is structured. The endless games with words, encounters with sounds in unexpected contexts or dreams, and motifs built from sounds which figure in complex structures are aspects of the prose which suggest that

music, especially combinations of sounds prior to musical structure which are written down, teaches the things about language we cannot know consciously. This process begins in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

Like Ulysses this novel contains many songs and references to songs from nursery rhyme to religious hymns and Wagner. Similarly, a receptiveness to the sounds of words in foreign languages is also something which is carried forward into the later novel. As one of its main concerns is the way in which words become part of human consciousness through language, the interaction of words and music, through the sounds that words make, is a theme that is developed steadily through Portrait. One of the earliest associations between words and music is Stephen's visualisation of his own funeral when he recalls the words of a nursery rhyme: "...the words, so beautiful and sad, like music" (Portrait, 24).¹ Stephen's sensitivity to the sounds of words is just as intense in late adolescence, as he listens to the sensuous beauty of the Latin words *Mulier cantat* (Portrait, 244) as it is in early childhood, when the words of song or his father's voice telling a story combine with other sense experiences, the smell of his mother and father or the feel of the bed after wetting it, as the young Stephen encounters them. Much of the effect of the sermon on hell in the central chapter is from the sound of rhetorical patterns and rhythms. The sounds of single words – "apologize", "admit", "confess" – become minor motifs evoking the haunting sounds of admonishment through early adolescence and indicate the mind's way of learning by repetition. Joyce's subject is the development of the young mind so his method of presenting this must to some extent imitate this. Other words are seized upon for their aural quality and then the associations they attract. This has already occurred in the first story of Dubliners in which the word "paralysis" has a fearful effect on the young narrator. In the novel the word "suck" firstly lodges in Stephen's mind for its sound alone and then develops through the associations it gathers in other contexts, suggesting the sound of water leaving the basin in a hotel lavatory, the visualization of which sets off a memory of feeling hot and cold after seeing those words labelling the taps. Sounds without meanings have meanings or associations invested in them, such as the "pick, pack, pock, puck" of the cricket bats which twice reminds Stephen of water drops from a fountain (Portrait, 41, 60) – its recurrence suggests the way

¹ References to Portrait are from the Penguin Books edition, Harmondsworth, 1960.

certain associations are not of the moment but remain in the mind - , the different sounds of the pandybat linked to the degrees of pain it inflicted, and the comical suggestions of the name Dolan, which Stephen associates with a washerwoman.

Pure sound has the power to unlock feelings trapped all day in Stephen's mind when he hears the sudden snatch of music from an open door at the side of a theatre, the music momentarily touching something unconscious: "His unrest issued from him like a wave of sound: and on the tide of flowing music the ark was journeying, trailing her cables of lanterns in her wake" (Portrait, 75). Yet, in a moment of Joycean realism, the sound of the music shows its vulnerability to interruption by other sounds (here clapping): "Then a noise, like dwarf artillery broke the movement".

As Stephen's mind develops he becomes aware of the theories behind sounds and music. The "elfin prelude" that he hears on the beach before the vision of the wading girl is made up of sound intervals which Stephen can name – "a tone", "a diminished fourth", "a major third" (Portrait, 165). But the music here is "fitful" and "endless and formless" and merely resolves itself into other words (Newman's prose), suggesting that the sound is a product of Stephen's unconscious, urging him on to new adventure, but without any definite plan. There is also a hint that Stephen's intellectual precocity is being mocked by Joyce as pretentiousness – a diminished fourth as a sound, and outside a musical context, is essentially the same as a major third. The following encounter with the girl on the beach, which has been the subject of comparison with Debussy's musical portrait of a cloudscape in the first movement of his Nocturnes, sees Stephen pondering the relationship between colour and words and sounds. The phrase "harmonized in a chord" gives a musical image of the integration of perceptions – the phrase, the day and the scene – which prompts Stephen to analyse his own sensitivity to words and whether colour is also a part of this – "Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour?" (Portrait, 167). It is interesting that Joyce chooses this simple musical image to describe an impression or thought composed of several elements together. Even though Stephen is not contemplating music specifically, it is the medium which best describes the inner world of aesthetic instincts, the significance of which is beginning to dawn on Stephen. This is also a prelude to the use of other devices in Ulysses to render the simultaneity of events or experiences.

After this episode in the novel the stream of consciousness thickens, as self-made words such as “disremember” enter Stephen’s language and he begins work on his aesthetic theory, sharpening his sensitivity to words and the language they create. Contrasting the child Stephen’s reaction to sounds with that of early adulthood at the book’s close, it is found that the pure sounds of words (here Yeats’ from the end of The Countess Cathleen) are now given the kind of verbal gloss which detracts from their value as sounds, which appears to be Joyce’s method of illustrating a necessary stage of pretentiousness in Stephen’s development: “A soft liquid joy flowed through the words where the soft long vowels hurtled noiselessly and fell away, lapping and flowing back and ever shaking the white bells of their waves in mute chime and mute peal, and soft low swooning cry...” (Portrait, 225-6). The point of overloading the description with language here is to show the attempt at possession by the conscious interpreting mind over experiences which are unconscious, such as the processing and interpretation of sound and, ultimately, music.

Joyce’s use of sound and music, the ways in which they connect with words, and the ideas behind the connections, is very much allied with the development of the protagonist in Portrait. In Ulysses, the inclusive nature of Joyce’s agenda demands the possible admission of any subject or style, so from an early stage there is an excuse for saturating the text with, simply, the things which interested Joyce - musical references, everyday sounds in words, fragments of songs and arias, puns on the sounds of words and the musical qualities of spoken language. The ‘Sirens’ episode of Ulysses is Joyce’s most detailed exercise in the literary mimicry of music, but there are many other previous instances of this in the novel. ‘Calypso’ contains two significant examples of this dalliance with pure sound effect. When Bloom translates the ‘ABC’ song he overhears in the school, the text is only meaningful through acquaintance with the original stress rhythms of the song:

Ahbeesee defeegee kelomen opeecue rustyouvee
doubleyou.....

(‘Calypso’, 48)²

² References to Ulysses are from the Penguin Books edition, Harmondsworth, 1986.

As can be seen, a “musical” rendition of the words of the song makes nonsense of the original words. This is typical of Joyce’s tendency to look for new semantic possibilities out of sound transcriptions, or simply to be fascinated by what such transcriptions *look* like on the page. The sounds of the church bells of St. George’s, which remind Bloom of Paddy Dignam’s imminent funeral, are also translated into words at the end of the episode:

Heigho! Heigho!
Heigho! Heigho!
Heigho! Heigho!
Quarter to. There again: the overtone
Following through the air. A third.
(‘Calypso’, 57)

The bells are represented sonically first then commented on by Bloom as he notices the harmonics, the weaker reverberating sounds at various intervals above the base note. Again the representation of sound in words is a distraction from the sound itself, yet in this instance there is a temporal dimension in that the overtone occurs, both in sonic reality and on the printed page, after the main sound. This description of Bloom’s perception of the sounds is relevant because what he hears is not harmony, different notes sounding together, which is impossible to reproduce on the page, but different notes sounding successively, which can be rendered verbally. Joyce actually notated the bell chimes of this church, based on the Cambridge Quarters Chime, indicating the fundamental notes and their overtones.³

The ‘Lestrygonians’ episode contains an early attempt at conveying simultaneous action. Davy Byrne’s smile, yawn and nod are first compounded as one single verb, “Davy Byrne smileyawnednodded all in one” and then, in another attempt to portray this, Joyce transcribes it into sound, as if the look of the above compounded word on the page would distract the reader’s inner ear: “Iiiiiichaaaaaach!” (‘Lestrygonians’, 145). It is hard to imagine the sounds Joyce had in mind for a smile and a nod, but this

³ Reprinted in Timothy Martin and Ruth Bauerle, ‘The Voice from the Prompt Box: Otto Luening Remembers James Joyce in Zurich’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol.17, 1 (Summer 1990), 35-48, (39). Luening comments here that Joyce had an accurate knowledge of the acoustic phenomenon of overtones.

technique previews later experiments, especially in 'Sirens', at writing contrapuntally to enable the reader to apprehend more than one thing at a time.

Another verbal representation of sound occurs in 'Wandering Rocks' with the "Bang!" or "Barang!" of the laquey's handbell ('Wandering Rocks', 195-6). The word "Bang!" suggests, semantically, a totally different sound to that of a clanging bell, yet it is phonologically accurate. It may be that Joyce is commenting on the way sounds have predetermined associations according to the language we speak, even if they suggest other ideas phonologically. The complaints of the Bloom cat are also relevant here. Various spellings are offered - "Mkgnao!", "Mrkgnao!", "Mrkrgrnao!" ('Calypso', 45) - none of which resembles the conventional "Miaow!" Two possible points are that either language can be more accurate than accepted formulations render it, or the cat is trying to communicate different shades of meaning (possibly relating to the "modality of the audible" idea in the previous episode - perhaps Bloom cannot interpret these signals as he is "blinded" by the mode of vision).

Often when a musical subject is raised the language takes on a musical quality. During Stephen's encounter with Almidano Artifoni, the Italian tutor who urges him to pursue a musical career in Dublin, the "pigeons roocoocooed" ('Wandering Rocks', 188) and thus a new verb, something syntactical, is produced from a sound, something phonological. While in conversation in Italian, Stephen sways his ashplant "in slow swingswong from its midpoint slowly", the words mimicking the sound of the stick moving through the air. In this scene Joyce is simply maximising the opportunity to create additional musical associations with the subject of the characters' conversation.

In 'Aeolus' the press machines clank "in three four time" and are rendered linguistically by the word "Sllt.", which temporarily becomes a punctuating motif ('Aeolus', 98 and 100). The hyphens added to the word "come" - "Co-me" - in the aria from Martha ('Aeolus', 97) represent the rhythm of Flotow's setting as it runs through Bloom's mind. These are attempts at lifting the sounds implied or indicated by the signs on the printed page nearer to the reader's ear, even though the tools Joyce has to do this are merely other printed signs. There would seem to be irony in Professor MacHugh's remark in this episode that "We mustn't be led away by words,

by sounds of words" ('Aeolus', 108), for the sounds of words is something which this novel brings the reader closer to and is one of its guiding principles.

Other more superficial musical intrusions occur in the form of notated chant melody ('Scylla and Charybdis', 162), the manuscript-like appearance possibly adding to the effect of Stephen's over-indulgence in scholarship, and the musical directions – "*piano, diminuendo*", "*a tempo*", "*stringendo*" – given to a conversation between Stephen, Buck Mulligan and others, which assumes the character of a musical dramatisation on the line "What's in a name?" ('Scylla and Charybdis', 172). This is a snap preview of procedures used in 'Circe' and offers relief from the intensely allusive nature of this episode.

I will now turn to the issue of sound and musical reference in 'Sirens'. There is an abundance of this material in the episodes after 'Sirens', such as the ambiguous incantatory repetitions at the head of 'Oxen of the Sun', the casting of parts for bells and gong in 'Circe' (355), which is an attempt to render echo on the printed page, and the random sounds entering into the capricious narrative of 'Penelope' – "frseeeeeeeefronnnng" (621). Yet there is little that is new in this area after 'Sirens', for this episode represents a climax of Joyce's interest in musico-literary experiment. Musical references and sounds are relevant to this part of the chapter, and analogies to structures will be considered in the second part. Noises imitative of physical sound – "Hissss", "Pwee!", "Fff!" – are juxtaposed with syllabic distortions of actual speech – "Imperthnthn thnthnthn" – , the sounds of dialogue, the imagined and real sounds of songs and arias, and references to other physical sounds which are real – of Bloom's elastic band or the blind stripling's stick – or imagined – the jingling of the bed quoits. Some of these are developed as motifs, which advance the progress of the psychological narrative, while others exist only as decorative additions to the patterns being woven in sound.

In addition to these actual sounds, Joyce creates devices from the sounds of words, often onomatopoeic, which imitate musical techniques. These devices can be related to any period in Western music and to any genre. Although Joyce chooses to imitate predominantly those techniques which are found in opera or vocal music, there are others which apply to music in general. The specifically musical effects have been

frequently documented and discussed, and there is no need for an exhaustive survey here, but I shall offer a few examples to show that Joyce's technical range is beyond just the devices of vocal music. The effects include appoggiatura or leaning note, serving as ornamentation;

Luring. Ah, alluring.
(‘Sirens’, 226)

glissando, or sliding note, from imitating the sound of the rain;

Drops. Rain. Diddleiddle addleaddle oodleoodle.
(232)

a cadence, as chords with different combinations of notes are sounded;

....ringhoof ringsteel.
(212)

Big Benaben Dollard. Big Benben. Big Benben.
(236)

continual modulation, in this “waiter, waited, waiting” sequence, from noun to verb participle, as found in Wagner and Debussy;⁴

Pat, waiter, waited, waiting to hear, for he was
hard of hear by the door. (225)

and a fermata, or pause, here at the climax of a cadence just before its resolution;

the endlessnessnessness.... (227)

⁴ The process of continual modulation, in which the melody line avoids conventional harmonic resolution and is often spun out to great length, was developed by Wagner in his operas and used in more compressed form, to suggest ambiguity, by Debussy in his orchestral works. Joyce's varying forms of the word “wait” represent different notes around a base note to colour the harmonies.

The resolution to this cadence, indicated by the word “Siopold!” (227), fuses the three names, Simon, Lionel and Leopold, and is simultaneously a sexual and musical climax - the actual words “Come to me!”, from Flotow’s *Martha* are being sung at this point by Simon Dedalus. The connections Bloom is making in his mind between himself and the aria that is being sung are demonstrated most economically and emotionally by this single chord of many feelings and ideas sounding together. The idea of a build-up to, and resolution of, a cadential chord is notably apt as chords in any one key share notes with chords in another key and thus show their dependence and individuality at the same time. The name “Siopold” suggests that Bloom’s identity at this point is a combination of thoughts about the various influences around him. The point is reinforced by the gradual escalation of tension prior to the climax, alternating Bloom’s thoughts with lines from the aria.

Other devices to have been found in the chapter include trills, decrescendos, harmonic unisons, harmonic suspensions and passages of recitative. Harmony is especially significant in the building of tension and in experimentation with form, as will be seen in the next section of this chapter. Such implied knowledge of the mechanics of music is perhaps testimony to Joyce’s active and varied reading habits during his years in Zurich.

Also present in ‘Sirens’ are devices common to both linguistic and musical rhetoric, such as alliteration and chiasmus. Alliterative lines like

The sweets of sin. Sweet are the sweets. (213)

Bloom. Old Bloom. Blue Bloom is on the rye. (215)

have their musical counterpart in the “head” motif of a theme. Although alliteration is clearly a literary device employed for rhetorical purposes, its effect is only fully felt by listening. Examples of the equivalent device in music, especially from the baroque and classical periods when rhetoric was such a dominant feature of music, occur so frequently as to pass the listener by unnoticed. An instance of this in a well-known tune is the “head” motif from the main *Allegro* theme from Rossini’s overture to

William Tell, or the first theme of the first movement from Mozart's Symphony no.40, K550.⁵

This is the best example of the rhetorical device of chiasmus from 'Sirens':

Miss Kennedy sauntered sadly from bright light,
twining a loose hair behind an ear. Sauntering sadly,
gold no more, she twisted twined a hair. Sadly she
twined in sauntering gold hair behind a curving ear.

(212)

but there is a neater one in 'Aeolus', the episode of Ulysses richest in rhetorical figures:

Grossbooted draymen rolled barrels dullthudding
out of Prince's stores and bumped them upon the
brewery float. On the brewery float bumped dull-
thudding barrels rolled by grossbooted draymen
out of Prince's stores. ('Aeolus', 96)

In music chiasmus is a simple and natural way of reordering or mirroring elements in a theme. An example from a popular classic is the second subject of Schubert's *Unfinished* (Eighth) Symphony (first movement).⁶ Once again, if not part of a speech, its use in words can feel laboured and, if we are to believe that 'Sirens' marks the beginning of Joyce's tendency for self-parody in Ulysses, passages such as the above suggest the creation of style for style's sake, not an illustration of how closely music and words are related.

Besides this saturation with sonic experiment, there are numerous other links between 'Sirens' and music. Actual pieces feature more in this episode, largely vocal although there are mentions of Liszt's Rhapsodies and Mendelssohn's piano music. Joyce has up to this point in the novel steadily amassed a reference library of songs and arias with which to allude to characters or plot lines. This reaches a peak in 'Sirens' in

⁵ Musical example 1 (on accompanying tape).

⁶ Musical example 2.

density and variety, and in the way fragments from these songs are exploited as motifs with which to suggest the internal world of Bloom. The pieces mentioned are mainly nineteenth-century songs and arias – songs such as ‘When the Bloom is on the Rye’ (by Fitzball and Bishop, used earlier in ‘Wandering Rocks’), ‘Goodbye, Sweetheart, Goodbye’ and ‘The Last Rose of Summer’, and a song from the collaborative operetta Florodora (first mentioned in ‘Aeolus’); the opera by Balfe, Rose of Castille, arias from operas by Bellini, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, Mozart and (by implication) Wagner, and Flotow’s Martha (occurring first in ‘Aeolus’). Many of these songs have been mentioned in previous episodes and reflect the action of the narrative – notably the theme of unfaithfulness in a female lover in the aria ‘Tutto è sciolto’ from Bellini’s La Sonnambula. The Irish ballad song ‘The Croppy Boy’, introduced in ‘Hades’, becomes a source of obsessive reference in ‘Sirens’, sometimes combining meaninglessly with fragments from another song – ‘*Naminedamine. All gone. All fallen.*’ (211) – indicative of the way the mind randomly associates. Yet despite the density of reference, Joyce is not exploiting the specifically musical aspects of any of these pieces. Parallels with actual composers in modes of execution is matter for the next chapter; these songs and arias add to the tapestry of surface sound in ‘Sirens’ as well as complementing Joyce’s own musical games with words.

The text of the episode is also peppered with musical terminology, thinly disguised – “transposed”, “tonic”, “overtures”, “droned”, “harping on”, etc.; new meanings are created by phonological suggestion – “in exquisite contrast”, “non exquisite contrast” (220); percussive sound motifs assert themselves with varying degrees of insistency – “Pom.” (representing the drummer in Rooney’s band), “Jingle.” and other “j” words (“joggled”, “jaunted”, “jiggedy”) associated with Boylan, and the “Tap.Tap.Tap.” of the blind man’s stick. There is an overflow of gratuitously phonological effects as one word suggests another through its sound or through its orthographic likeness to another word – “She took no notice while he read by rote a solfa fable for her, plappering flatly” (215). Many of the simple compound words that Joyce indulges in here are, in their subject matter, connected with sound – “Longindying call” (210), “Goodgod henev erheard inall” (210), “Deep sounding” (211) – and point to the way words in the rhythms of connected speech are heard not as the individual words we know in print.

One general implication of the 'Sirens' episode is that regardless of the degree to which music or sound threatens to usurp the language, there remains a recognisable narrative which the words still manage to sustain. The sentence prevails as the unit of meaning despite the continual disruption to the syntactical flow by phonological intrusion. From the point of view of the sonic aspects of music, it may be viewed as an experiment to gauge the extent to which words can either imitate music, or defy fragmentation into sound alone. This latter test certainly accords with the Homeric theme of Odysseus' successful scheme to resist the spell of the Sirens' song.

Sounds and effects: Eliot

Many of the experiments Joyce makes with sound in 'Sirens' parallel the kind of sonic suggestiveness in The Waste Land, and the use of musical terminology is also to be found in earlier Eliot poems. However, in Eliot's poetry the effects made by sound are much less blatantly musical. They are not generally presented as being musical devices but leave the reader with that effect, especially when the poems are read aloud. The most noticeable musical uses of sound occur in The Waste Land, but there are anticipations of this in earlier poems. Also in these poems we find direct references to music which are emblematic of an aesthetic which is highly conscious of the cultural hierarchies of different musical and literary forms. The titles alone give clues as to the kind of music familiar to the social world of the poems' personae – the prelude, rhapsody and five-finger exercise were all forms of Romantic piano music representing the domestic music-making environment inhabited by the wealthy middle-class. Even the 'Galante' from 'Conversation Galante' indicates a style in which invention is second to decoration. It is this sense of music as having a decorative role to play, rather than as the mysterious source of creative energy it becomes in later poems, which characterises these works. This is not of course Eliot's view of the music referred to, but a scathing glimpse of how it is appropriated and serves to comfort the insecurities of the speakers.

'Portrait of a Lady' makes the most consistent use of music as a motif for articulating the text's argument. The sounds of music punctuate the poem, often blending with

other momentary sense impressions which signal a change in the direction of the speaker's thoughts. The only actual music mentioned by name, Chopin's Preludes for piano (which Eliot probably had in mind for the title of his poems with this name), appears at the poem's opening and thereafter the speaker's awareness of music becomes more fragmented and less sophisticated – the violins and cornets are “attenuated” and “remote”, and play “windings” and “ariettes”, the tom-tom merely becomes an image for the speaker's headache, the voice of the lady recalls an out-of-tune and broken violin, the sound of the street piano is “mechanical and tired”, and the poem ends with music as speech. These punctuating motifs chart the gradual breaking up of fully-formed musical structure into fragments of sound which merge uncontrollably with other superficial thoughts. However, this outlook is presaged at the outset by the word “Transmit”, suggesting that the piano music by Chopin is conveyed to the listeners rather than communicated, as if a broadcast of information – the word focuses on the way the music is received and not how it is interpreted by the player. The audience notice fingers and hair, the separation of the body parts forecasting the mind's fragmentation of the music. The next occurrence of the music motif is a random diversion from the Chopin, violins and cornets belonging to another age, and most likely represents something in the back of the speaker's mind. At the sound of the tom-tom there is a dissolution of music into sounds associated with everyday living. The next musical image compares the lady's voice to “the insistent out-of-tune / Of a broken violin on an August afternoon”, which dilutes its musical impact by overloading it with other associations until music becomes a convenient metaphor for mere whimsical mood or casual observations. Further devaluation occurs at the end of the second section as the sound of the “mechanical and tired” street piano is diluted with the smell of hyacinths to evoke second-hand desires – “Recalling things that other people have desired”. The final appearance of music, a “dying fall” hinting at the music of speech and recalling ‘Prufrock’, seems to occur only as the thought of dying suggests it. Furthermore, the words “This music” imply that the speaker feels he has created his own music in the form of the poem, completing a process of decay from a piece of music to self-centred rambling.

Other than the title, there are no particularly musical sounds or references in ‘Rhapsody on a Windy Night’ – the rhapsody in the title may merely suggest the capriciousness of the wind. ‘Conversation Galante’ is the earliest piece in the group

and again shows Eliot using music to exemplify an attitude towards music. The implied criticism levelled at those who treat music flippantly emanates more directly from the speaker, even though it is within a reported conversation. The “nocturne” referred to could, again, be a piano piece by Chopin, which is “framed” by the player into suggesting the kind of mood and images which have become platitudes of the genre – music evoking “The night and moonshine” with which the listeners can “body forth [their] own vacuity”. The music becomes used as an unthinking reaction to sounds with undigested associations, a convenient intermediary with which to respond aesthetically to the natural world. Interestingly, the nocturne was originally a vocal piece often quite different in character from the solo piano miniature it became in the nineteenth century. That Eliot was aware of this origin seems unlikely even though the use of the name adds to the sense of something being appropriated by someone distant from its creator.

The sense of distance is present too in the two references to music in ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’. Both the “music from a farther room” and the song of the mermaids, the latter perhaps from a dream, occur in the background or in a context in which the speaker is not directly involved, contributing to the irony behind the poem’s title, of a song never sung or a love never declared. What emerges in these early poems amounts to an indictment of the way music serves as cliché when undigested whole or becomes a background of fragmented sounds which jolt the mind into conditioned responses. This has little to do with the music in Four Quartets, even with that of The Waste Land, yet the prevalence of such attitudes among the voices of these superficial New Englanders complements the seriousness with which Eliot’s own voice confronts musical matters later on.

The Waste Land is Eliot’s most varied experiment with sound. As well as its great rhythmic diversity, the poem also contains sounds such as bird song, water dripping, a cock crowing and words in various languages, which are all equally definable as music or noises, and is thus inconceivable as mere unheard words on a printed page. The fact that it concludes with lines in Sanskrit, a spoken form of communication which became exclusively written and highly scholarly, is one of its ironies in this respect. Indeed it may have been one of Eliot’s purposes to remind the reader lost in the poem’s phonology of its textual roots. However, The Waste Land as a whole

demands to be heard, or even performed. Its saturation in sounds leaves the first-time reader no chance to reflect on meanings or references, as if Eliot were intentionally overloading the poem with erudite material in an attempt to stress that meaning was not meant to keep pace with aural effect. The sounds in the poem are of three principal types: the words of songs whose rhythms shape the text; other sounds which are not specifically musical; and the rhythms Eliot generates from his verbal arrangement.

The first of these is represented by examples such as the sailors' song from Tristan und Isolde in the first section, the lines from a rag from the Ziegfeld Follies in the pub scene, the unknown ballad featuring Mrs Porter and the song of the Thames daughters in the third, and the rhyme "London Bridge is falling down" in the last. These songs appear to be on a level with the other voices of the poem's characters as they are more than mere sounds and indicate a change in intonation as well as discourse. Many of the non-musical sounds occur in the third section, perhaps to complement the song of the Thames daughters – the

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug.....

Tereu

imitating the sound of the nightingales, the reference to the whining mandoline, the "Weialala" of the Wagnerian refrain (which I here count as a sound rather than a song). The final section has other examples – the imagined dripping of the water, the crowing of the cock, the voices declaiming in Hindi mixed with the sound of the thunder, and the sound of the key from Dante's Inferno turning once in the door. These sounds break up the pattern of voices and form their own sound world, directing the reader to another level of interpretation - sound without specific meaning. The effect is rather like a composer introducing taped sounds from the natural world over his own composed orchestral music.

Finally, Eliot's rhythmic effects can be found everywhere in the poem. The quotations in four different languages at the very end of The Waste Land represent sounds and

rhythms together, for the kaleidoscopic contrasts in aural effect are what will strike the reader or listener here most immediately before any sense of the meaning is gained. Another instance of strong rhythmic effects is the pub scene in the second section. Here Eliot attempts to contrast three different rhythmic patterns, almost simultaneously, with Joycean effect. The reported conversation sets the predominant tone (in stark contrast to the opening of this section), while the rhythmically static but insistent bartender's refrain, "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME" adds a motif of detachment and urgency (instanced by the uniform punctuation of this line) to the colloquial loquacity of the other speakers. These resolve into the almost serene rhythms of a voice evoking Ophelia's last words, whose "good night"s flow into one another in a single sentence after the rapid staccato "Goonight"s of Bill, Lou and May. A listener to a competent reading of this passage will appreciate the climaxes and graded changes in its rhythms, in the same way as listening to a piece of well-written music one's attention is focused on the effect achieved by the interaction of different patterns rather than hearing them in isolation.

On the subject of meaning in The Waste Land Paul Chancellor asks the question, "Certainly, some exegesis of *The Waste Land* is necessary, but after such exegesis, what poetry? Or what music?"⁷ Eliot's method with regard to the relative importance of meaning and music insists that music should precede such exegesis, as he himself outlines in his prose. Whether The Waste Land presents a cacophony or a symphony of sounds, it was a multi-vocal experiment which Eliot was not to repeat on such a scale. The sounds of The Hollow Men and of Ash-Wednesday belong more to an incantatory world of repetition and wordplay, and anticipate the more controlled musical plan in Four Quartets. Nevertheless, there is still evidence of a kind of gratuitous fascination with sounds in the lines

Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
About the centre of the silent Word.⁸

⁷ Paul Chancellor, 'The Music of "The Waste Land"', Comparative Literature Studies, vol.6, 1 (1969), 21-32, (22). Cited as Chancellor hereafter.

⁸ In the poem's 1935 publication, the text read "Against the World..." but this was corrected to "Word" in the 1962 version.

Although the themes of Four Quartets are adumbrated here, the words whose sounds are played with are not subjected to the same development and transformation as they are in the latter work. In this whole verse from the fifth section of Ash-Wednesday the sound effects have a local significance in the decoration and balancing of phrases which have a rhetorical function, achieved through repetition and arrangement –

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;

The scale alone of Four Quartets enables Eliot to develop the sounds of words and their combinations more thoroughly and in a variety of ways. In these four poems, which must be read as an entity for each to achieve its total effect, Eliot combines the use of sound repetition with vocal arrangement to give certain passages a musical organisation. Despite the fact that structural parallels may be made with The Waste Land, mainly the repetition of a five-part structure, the formal development of Four Quartets is more self-aware. Patterns of voices and themes appearing individually or combined are found in each quartet or in the poems when seen as a whole. A general organising device is the setting against each other of two different types of time, real time as represented by the war, the here and now, and timeless time in the rose garden. The poems are a contest between these principles, to which is added a thematic unity of place, beginning in England in the rose garden ('Burnt Norton'), and ending there during wartime ('Little Gidding'), visiting *en route* two places which touch on Eliot's American origins. Yet on a more detailed level the sound repetitions encountered earlier in The Waste Land and in Ash-Wednesday have an added function of developing the direction of the poetry. Eliot's use of the word "world" in 'Burnt Norton' is an example. In the first movement it appears twice: firstly in a context of generalisation about time – "Only in a world of speech" – then with a personal meaning, "Into our first world", that of childhood and the moment in the rose garden. It is as if two voices are used. In the second movement the word is used metaphysically, "At the still point of the turning world", in a single sentence representing a transition from lyrical to discursive modes, and philosophically in the tone of a lecturer – "both a new world / And the old made explicit". Apart from "At the still point of the turning world", "world" in these two movements means one of

several possible ways of seeing or thinking, or different domains of experience. The third movement, in its multiple repetitions of the word plays a game with it – “World not world, but that which is not world” – exaggerating this sense of relative worlds. There are worlds of sense, fancy and spirit. Yet in the fourth movement the line “At the still point of the turning world” is repeated, this time at the end of a lyrical section, not at the beginning of a discursive one. Its function is to bring the reader back to the idea of one world; the still point is the kind of absolute escape from time, the impossible aim that the cycle of poems is built around. This, in turn, is a preparation for the change from “world” to “word”, and “Word”, in the fifth movement. Here the word “world” is absent, but there are again the opposed ideas of relativity, words and their protean instability, and absoluteness, the Word in the desert. Only this time the themes are woven together as if polyphonically; two motifs from an earlier movement transformed are now heard together.

Besides a kind of sound play on “world” and “word”, these repetitions are a musical feature in that the ear fastens on to them each time they appear, detecting the change from “world” to “word” and providing a stimulus to find out exactly what the changes in meaning are. Thus aural markers direct the poem’s content. Unlike in the extract from Ash-Wednesday, Eliot makes more sustained use of the sounds he introduces so they become motifs. However, such use of sound is not always as artfully woven into the dialectic of the poetry. The fine description of the noises of the sea in the first movement of ‘The Dry Salvages’ is an indulgence in sound for the effect of sound – the “howl”, “yelp”, “whine” and “wailing” noises (even “groaner” has aural appeal) satisfy the ear without troubling the mind with questions of interpretation.

The principle of a motivic use of sound in Four Quartets necessarily renders sound less important than structure. It is this latter which takes over the musical effect of the work and a discussion follows in the next section of this chapter.

Musical structures

In this section I would like to examine in detail some critical responses to questions of musical structure in Four Quartets and Ulysses, and also in some plays by Eliot. My

own views on which musical structures are implicit in these texts, and which are analogous through the contemporary aesthetic will also be given.

There are perhaps more parallels between music and words in the area of pure sound than in structural terms. This is possibly because the analogies in the former field are linguistic and those of the latter are literary. Tones can be paired with phonemes, phrases with sentences, head-motifs with alliteration and so on. Formal analogies are less straightforward as musical forms are generally stricter and more ubiquitous than literary ones. Some forms overlap through their terminology – the rondo was originally a literary form, which was developed and transformed in its musical incarnation to a state where its original identity would be unrecognisable. With more fully worked-out musical structures, such as sonata form or fugue, true analogies are dubious because of their complexity, yet the spirit of some of these forms is often evident. Fugue in music may not translate directly into fugue in literature, but a writer may create a polyphonic effect by a number of methods – a rapid alternation of events or characters, repetition of a single idea as a refrain or kind of “ground” at regular intervals, maintaining several lines of development simultaneously for the reader to keep in mind, or, as Joyce often does, using or creating words or whole phrases with double meanings, which the reader may apprehend at the same time.⁹

Eliot

A review of Conrad Aiken’s The House of Dust in 1921 shows the extent to which poets had become aware of the more abstract influences of music on the written word. The writer mentions J.G. Fletcher and Amy Lowell as other poets who have attempted to write musically and, in the Aiken poem under review, finds Eliot’s voice notably resonant. The poem is discussed as a theme and variations and, assessing the spirit of the time, the reviewer finds that, “Only recently have the poets begun to realize the possibilities of a medium which, to the lyric intensities of a Richard Strauss, can add the contrapuntal sonorities of a César Franck”.¹⁰ Criticism of poetry in these terms suggests that the experimentation with music in the genre has progressed beyond mere melodic imitation towards structural awareness. Despite the reviewer’s general terms

⁹ Milos Zatkalik gives a useful summary of the general areas of analogy between music and literature in ‘Levels of the Musicalization of Literature’, New Sound International Magazine for Music, vol.12 (1998), 65-78.

¹⁰ Babette Deutsch, ‘Orchestral Poetry’, The Dial, vol.70, 3 (March 1921), 343-6, (343).

– “contrapuntal sonorities” does not indicate anything about how or what a poet might be experimenting with – the implication is that parallels are beginning to admit more abstract thought.

In 1930 Eliot worked with the French poet St. John Perse on a translation of his best-known work, Anabase, an epic poem on the subject of tribal migration in Asia. Some of Eliot’s most striking ideas on the general structural principles behind the writing of poetry can be found in the preface he wrote for this translation. These remarks are especially relevant to the poetry up to and including The Waste Land, that is to say the work which experiments most radically with poetic form and forces the reader to adopt new approaches to a more oblique form of expression. Joyce’s early work on Finnegans Wake is also mentioned as a piece of prose which is of equal importance in the development of poetic method. Eliot stresses directly that time, concentration and repeated reading are necessary for a full understanding of poetry constructed in this way. What is especially different and difficult is the presentation of images in a sequence without obvious connection, a procedure which seems to have a logic of its own. He explains that in St. John Perse’s poem there is an absence of “links in the chain” and that this method is employed so that

the sequence of images coincides and concentrates
into one intense impression of barbaric civilization.
The reader has to allow the images to fall into his
memory successively without questioning the reason-
ableness of each at the moment; so that, at the end, a
total effect is produced.¹¹

This recalls the importance of disconnection in The Waste Land and its anticipation in earlier poems from the ‘Prufrock’ volume. The missing links in the chain, the scarcity of grammatical or semantic signposts to guide the reader towards an overall meaning or grasp of the total structure, is also a dominant feature of music of exactly this period. The key word in the title of Eliot’s 1917 volume, Prufrock and Other Observations is “Observations”, for the poems rely on the reader’s ability to hold small clusters of information or images in the memory, rather than follow a narrative.

¹¹ T.S. Eliot, Preface to Anabasis (London, 1959), 9-10.

The influence of Imagism is reflected in the relative independence from conventional grammatical linking devices, similar to the absence of certain functional chords in early Modernist music. The poems are held together by image groups and references to ideas which recur as cells. In the title poem the argument proceeds through motifs on the ideas of time, confused signals and meanings, a street plan as a metaphor for rhetorical forms, and through the use of questions – “Do I dare?”, “Shall I say.....?” – and a refrain - “In the room the women come and go.....”. Beneath the conversational tone of the poem’s opening, there is a careful concentration in abstract thought of themes and images to be developed later. The urban landscape, the sea, the feeling of drowsy sensuality, the tendency to avoid ultimate questions and leave destinations unspecified are all present in some form. It may even seem curious that a poem about uncertainty, digression, imprecision and caution should here be so calculatingly plotted.

This density of construction is one reason why this and other poems from the volume were hard to understand for the contemporary reader. As with music from the same aesthetic, it is the ear which must pick out the articulating material in the poetry. In the case of ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, the many tones of voice of the narrator – cynicism, laziness, self-consciousness, lyricism – help to provide a structure for the reader unused to Eliot’s method. Although the intellectual frame of reference is wide, including Dante and Old Italian, Shakespeare, the Bible, Marvell and mythology, anticipating The Waste Land, identity is still sought *within* the text. Prufrock sees himself as a character abstracted from the real world and from the modern world, whose self-definition is gained from others’ writing or conversation. Through him, Eliot is able to diagnose the sterility of the age and is impatient to break with it by treating stifled social ritual in a form both innovative and challenging to the reader. Early Modernist music sometimes proceeds by a similar route, avoiding structures which are determined by a programmatic title, relying instead on the materials of music’s own form. Debussy’s La Mer (1905) shows a gradual break with convention in a similar way to Eliot’s city poems. The title is again important, for although this blatantly suggests a piece of programme music whose effects and construction may be governed by extra-musical ideas, the piece is in fact only an evocation of the sea, built entirely from its own self-generating materials. Debussy’s sub-title, ‘Three Symphonic Sketches’, indicates the importance of purely musical

structure ('Symphonic'), whilst avoiding strict conventional nomenclature – 'Sketches' avoids 'movements', so a traditional symphony is not expected, instead preparing the listener for something vaguer, almost noted down like Eliot's "Observations". Indeed, the piece contains many sound effects and ideas interpretable as reminiscent of the sea, including individual movement titles, yet is pure form in construction.

Although its structure is much tighter, in the general conception of La Mer there are similarities with Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune and the agenda of Mallarmé's 'Crise de Vers', in that compositional rules are being infringed rather than abandoned. In its second movement, with the title 'Jeux de vagues', the harmony is very different from the way harmonies had usually moved. Blocks of sound are used to give common harmonies an unusual edge and the whole tone scale is also employed. The movement is made up of sonic motifs, which form a mosaic of colourful fragments similar to parts of The Waste Land or Ulysses, most of which originate from material stated at its outset – a motif for cor anglais, a short violin figure, and a horn and woodwind phrase. Such is Debussy's preferred method of construction throughout La Mer, as all the movements make use of an initial rhythmic figure presented at the start of the piece. It is this muted cello motif on the first page of the score which is taken up by various instruments in the first movement and plays a determining role in the piece as a whole. Much of the material in the last movement is also derived from this opening gesture, as well as from other themes in the first movement, whose moods are transformed. Although these constant references bring an organicism to the work, Debussy's method is not like the classical procedure of developing, transforming and recapitulating themes. The ideas are not recognisable as themes or subjects, but are instead figures or motifs, in the same way as Eliot might set up an idea through single words or an image – "etherised" beginning the theme of drowsiness, or "oyster-shells" introducing the theme of the sea. As when reading 'Prufrock', it is hard to judge which themes or motifs are going to be of importance to the overall design – the opening of La Mer could pass as a simple ornamental rippling effect to the unwary listener, just as Eliot's first verse might seem to be fanciful image making. Moreover, the themes or motifs are not presented or developed with the same linear order and logic, which created the goal-directed structures of most classical (and some

romantic) antecedent models. Debussy's capriciousness in this respect reached its peak in the later orchestral score, Jeux.

Such music was not easy to listen to in the early 1900's, as one critic for The Times found when he complained that La Mer showed no logical development and made only vague structural sense.¹² The piece can exist on one level as a sequence of visual images in sound – Debussy intended the score to be accompanied by a reproduction of a sea painting by the Japanese artist Hokusai – yet confounded many early listeners who sought a musical interpretation. The parallel in Eliot's early city poems is the initial illusion that we are being offered a comfortable insider's view of New England society which later emerges as a harsh critique of that milieu through the penetrating vision of an outsider. The importance of the programmatic element in Debussy's music is the effect that the natural world has on the mind: the composition becomes an exploration of the impressions that experiences, of the sea, for example, have left on the memory. Consequently, a piece may become a record of a journey through the mind, or may even suggest a dream, in the way that a poem or prose passage lacking formal coherent links forces the reader to effect the connections between what first appear to be disparate elements. The erosion of accepted techniques, such as transitional passages in the structure of a piece or bridging chords in harmony, gave the composer greater freedom to evoke this world, as did the writer's abandonment of conventional syntax.

The Waste Land can be seen as the culmination of a progressively more densely allusive and disjointed method of writing poetry, to the extent that the existence of any kind of form eludes detection. Its popularity and wide appeal might be seen as ironic in view of these qualities. The poet Ted Hughes, in an introduction to a reading of the poem in London, saw Eliot's musicality as one of the poem's unifying and enduring features, claiming that the work is "...wide open...to those who can hear it as a musical composition" and that "The form of the poem is dominated, even determined, by Eliot's music".¹³ Yet if the poem is so fragmentary and the discontinuities so continuous, what is, then, the musical form behind The Waste

¹² La Mer was conducted by Debussy himself at Queen's Hall in London in February 1908. The piece elicited negative criticism for its constructional waywardness and over-emphasis on colouristic effect in The Times of February 3rd, 1908. Quoted in Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy (London, 1936), 94.

¹³ Ted Hughes, A Dancer to God (London, 1992), 13.

Land? Hughes probably did not see “Eliot’s music” as anything connected with actual musical procedures but he develops these comments with remarks on the sequence of words and the cadences they make, besides finding musicality in the drama of voices and speeches. For Hughes, who was about to give a reading, those who could hear the patterns in the sounds of the words and recognise the importance of their rhythms were clearly going to benefit more than anyone searching for a meaning behind the poem. This is very much the kind of approach the listener to early Modernist music, from Debussy to the transitional works of Schoenberg, would need to adopt if unfamiliar with the compositional style of such pieces. The diverse literary allusions in The Waste Land, from the opening Chaucerian echo through Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra and Hamlet to Spenser’s Prothalamion, cement the poem together as a piece of anti-pastoral and are an almost ironic commentary on the idea of organicism. In doing so, they act as Wagnerian leitmotifs which evoke the same idea on each occurrence. Other than considering the technique of the leitmotif, itself more of a patterning device than an example of form, it is probably unwise to seek precise musical analogues for the structure of the poem. Paul Chancellor rightly suggests that the parallel with Beethoven and the string quartet, which can be applied to Four Quartets, is invalid here as The Waste Land belongs to a thoroughly twentieth-century sensibility, making comparisons with Stravinsky and Schoenberg more realistic.¹⁴ Furthermore, the texture is orchestral rather than chamber-like. The poem is too rich in sounds of different qualities to embrace the intimacy of a chamber composition, unlike Four Quartets, which is made up of a few carefully distinguished voices which regularly interact. Chancellor’s analogy with programme music is fairly apt, yet seems overstretched when he mentions sonata form. There appear to be no clear developments and returns of themes to suggest Eliot had such a model in mind. The music in The Waste Land emerges from the sub-conscious, and purposefully excessive, realisation of sound combinations over meaning.

Of musical structure in Four Quartets there is much more to say. Eliot’s concentrated use of a small group of voices allows possibilities of fugal and sonata form analogies, while the varied repetition and development of certain key words or images provides patterning of structures on a smaller scale. Furthermore, the overall design of the

¹⁴ Chancellor, 29.

work, involving the fourfold repetition of the same model in four separate poems, tantalises the critical mind into discussions on organicism and cyclical form.

One of the keenest enquirers into the musical structures behind Four Quartets is Keith Alldritt. His collection of essays on music in Four Quartets, Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Poetry as Chamber Music, spends some time discussing the patterns which voices make. He regards Eliot as a writer "who felt compelled to resort to mask, role and persona,a poet of many voices, ...who was sensitively aware of the tact of his several roles and identities", and who chose the "quartet" title for this reason.¹⁵ Also in his introduction Alldritt has this to say:

One way in which Eliot's poem marks a development from the work of Mallarmé is that it makes a general allusion not to music but to a precise and definite form in music which we know to have originated at a fairly definite point in history and to have developed its own character, range and achievements. The particular musical qualities of the poem are established from the very outset in the title.¹⁶

Alldritt refers to the string quartet as a form but I prefer 'genre' for its greater flexibility. As I have stated earlier, I believe Eliot to have used it in order to avoid commitment to the constraints of a particular structure, and so to foreground possibilities of voice arrangement. Thus I agree that Eliot is making a "general allusion", but not to a "precise and definite form". The string quartet has associations with the strictness of sonata form but its more defining principle is the patterning of the instruments. If Eliot did intend this weighting of ideas, it may explain his rejection of "sonata" in favour of "quartet" for the title.

Throughout his study Alldritt is at pains to remind the reader of Four Quartets' Symbolist roots. Words are more important than the ideas they represent, their precise use and individual power are important as much as the orders into which they are

¹⁵ Keith Alldritt, Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Poetry as Chamber Music (London, 1978), 33. Cited as Alldritt hereafter.

¹⁶ Alldritt, 27.

arranged. Alldritt calls the poem “a pattern of words” at one point.¹⁷ This awareness of the work as a legacy of Symbolism is critical, partly because of the Symbolist predilection to associate the poet’s work with that of the musician, but also because it explains Alldritt’s perception of the musical qualities of Four Quartets on two levels – one of voice arrangement and the other of the treatment of individual words. Alldritt has a lot more to say about music in these poems but I shall limit my comments to what I see as the most valuable contributions, the two areas referred to above.

The first essay in Alldritt’s book treats Four Quartets as a series of exchanges among four voices. These are assigned verbal roles: Alldritt actually names them as “lecturer”, “prophet”, “conversationalist” and “conjurer”, each voice possessing its own range, recognisable as having the same identity or attitude each time it appears but exhibiting some variations in tone. Later examples of how the voices sometimes “sound together in passages of trio, duet or quartet”, an analysis of how these voices are arranged in ‘Burnt Norton’, and of how the addition of a new voice modifies the language of a familiar one, seem to me a convincing way of interpreting the musical motives behind the composition of Four Quartets without analytically straining analogies.¹⁸ Although Alldritt is enforcing his own personal matrix of analysis on the poems, singling out and naming the voices is a useful tool with which to illuminate the analogy with a string quartet and we need not necessarily agree with Alldritt’s actual names or points of identification of these voices.

In ‘East Coker’(II) Alldritt cites the sudden change in style at “That was a way of putting it – not very satisfactory...” as an example of one voice (the conversationalist) criticising another (the prophet) which then “modulates questioningly” into that of the lecturer: “There is, it seems to us, / At best, only a limited value / In the knowledge gained from experience”. It is then implied, though not stated, that the subsequent contribution towards the end of the movement from the prophet’s voice, “a language that conveys an awareness of fear and of loneliness and also a new humility”, has been modified as a result of this criticism.¹⁹ This kind of procedure strengthens the

¹⁷ Ibid. 21.

¹⁸ Alldritt, 39-42.

¹⁹ Ibid. 47-8.

case for an analogy with the instruments of a string quartet or with any closely argued piece of chamber music.

Such a conception of vocal argument highlights the poems as pieces capable of being performed and invites comparison with Eliot's plays, especially the near contemporaneous Murder in the Cathedral and The Family Reunion. Alldritt sees 'East Coker' as an investigation into the nature of the divided self: the self has many roles to play and many voices to be expressed.²⁰ The characters in The Family Reunion fall into two distinct groups, older and younger, who speak the same dialect but do not share each other's language. The greatest disparity is between Harry and the older characters – Agatha urges Harry to "Talk in your own language, without stopping to debate / Whether it may be too far beyond our understanding" (FR, 294), as if the act of speech alone assists communication.²¹ This, coming immediately after the introduction of Harry, also seems to be an instruction to the reader to remain patient while a new voice evolves. The character of Harry embodies the sense of imprisonment within a discourse whilst being aware of its potential – "If I tried to explain, you could never understand... Explaining would only set me farther away from you" (FR, 309); "Only that's not the language / That I choose to be talking. I will not talk yours" (FR, 324); and, most desperately, "Oh, there *must* be another way of talking / That would get us somewhere. You don't understand me" (FR, 327). Harry's most revealing frustration shows him aspiring to the condition of music:

They don't understand what it is to be awake,
To be living on several planes at once
Though one cannot speak with several voices at once. (FR, 324)

The use of a Chorus in both Murder in the Cathedral and The Family Reunion provides a metaphor for many speaking as one, especially as Eliot provides no instructions as to performance – when should the Chorus speak in unison and when are parts to be delivered by individuals? In both plays the Chorus has the effect of summarising the state of play between various stylistic factions, and of physically

²⁰ Alldritt sees Eliot as working in a tradition of thinking about the self begun by Diderot in Le Neveu de Rameau, in which an entire opera is performed by a single character. See Alldritt, 51-3.

²¹ References to The Family Reunion are from T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays (London, 1969).

‘organising’ sound in periodically bringing the voices together. One would like to speak with many voices at once but only the writer can do this: in poetic drama more colour can be given to a single voice (Harry’s) by setting it off against others and switching from mode to mode.

The construction of the plays, and of Four Quartets, is in this sense musical. In the essays ‘The Music of Poetry’ and ‘Poetry and Drama’ Eliot attaches great importance to the links between musical “pattern” and the way a verse drama can be structured. Comparisons with music are insistent, the phrase “musical pattern” and the notion of arrangement of voices recurring. In Murder in the Cathedral the broad design is of blocks of prose passages breaking up the blank verse – The Christmas Day sermon in the centre and the Knights’ speeches near the end. The choral passages have the role of framing each part. The Family Reunion displays patterns that are more subtle. Much of the comedy in the play emanates from close juxtaposition of dense passages of introspection, most often from Harry or Agatha, with flippant replies from the older characters:

AGATHA - When the loop in time comes – and it does not
come for everybody –

The hidden is revealed, and the spectres show themselves.

GERALD - I don't in the least know what you're talking about.
You seem to be wanting to give us all the hump.

(FR, 289)

As well as exhibiting structural parallels with Four Quartets, the play also touches on the notion that physical sound is a means of transporting the self beyond its private world. The “certain inflexible laws / Unalterable, in the nature of music” set against “the weather report / And the international catastrophes” is the only image of permanence amid the catalogue of transient acts of the surface world listed by the Chorus at the close of Part 2, scene 1. Significantly, Eliot chose to include this chorus

in a selection of readings he recorded in 1955, and vocally highlights the juxtaposition of the poetic and the everyday in this passage.²² An earlier speech by Harry anticipates the concluding lines of 'Little Gidding' in which sound is most distilled:

HARRY - I have spent many years in useless travel;
You have staid in England, yet you seem
Like someone who comes from a very long distance,
Or the distant waterfall in the forest,
Inaccessible, half-heard.
And I hear your voice as in the silence
Between two storms, one hears the moderate
usual noises
In the grass and leaves, of life persisting,
Which ordinarily pass unnoticed.
(FR, 309)

At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
('Little Gidding', V)²³

The fact that there are similarities between the material for both Murder in the Cathedral and The Family Reunion, and Four Quartets – some of the lines from the earlier play were incorporated into 'Burnt Norton' – encourages the reader of the

²² Sound recording T.S. Eliot reading (New York, 1955).

²³ Eliot's use of the term "half-heard" in both of these passages is interesting in relation to an article by J.B. Trend, 'Musicians and Philosophers', he published in The New Criterion, vol.4, 2 (April 1926), 342-9, in which recent developments in music are discussed with especial reference to Debussy, Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Bartók. This passage relates to Debussy, particularly the piece 'Soirée dans Grenade':

People accustomed to hear, or rather half-hear, what they had half-heard before, found their ears sharpened by having to listen to the ambiguous effects of the whole-tone scale, to 'telescoped' chords, and short cuts at the cadences. (346)

cycle of poems to perceive them as, in their own way, verse dramas patterned from the voices of unacknowledged personae. A passage from The Rock (1934) is also prophetic of Four Quartets' reverence for the superior directness music has over the vagueness of words –

Out of the sea of sound the life of music,
Out of the slimy mud of words, out of the sleet and hail
of verbal imprecisions.....²⁴

Remarks in the essay 'Poetry and Drama' indicate the close attention Eliot paid to technical matters of rhythm and stress in The Family Reunion, on his own admission to the detriment of plot and character. The short passages of lyrical dialogue for Harry and Mary/Agatha are referred to as "duet[s]", and "too much like operatic arias", as if Eliot cannot avoid suggesting an operatic form of recitative, aria and ensemble pieces, even though he sees this aspect of the play's structure as a weakness as the "arias" hold up the action.²⁵ The constant switches in tone from an informal colloquial manner to poetic and metaphysical level of address, and the consequent emergence of alternate narrative and lyrical passages, are tempting fodder for the critic who might surmise that Eliot had an operatic model in mind. Had he shown a more obvious interest in opera and vocal music, this would be a distinct possibility.

Besides his interest in vocal arrangement, Alldritt also points out ways in which Eliot may be hinting at the element of dialectic implicit in sonata form. An important essay by music critic J.B. Trend in The Criterion on sonata form is quoted and Alldritt even conceives of Four Quartets as an argument between *experiences* as first subjects and the *effects of experiences* as second subjects. However, his notion that individual words or phrases can undergo redefinition through their patterning, an idea begun by Helen Gardner, is eligible for comparison with music in the way material is handled in the development section of a sonata form movement.²⁶ For Alldritt urban and pastoral are oppositions running through the first three of Four Quartets, to which the place adverbials "here" and "there" are respectively attached. "Here" and "now", or the 'here and now', becomes a symbol for the present urban and stale consciousness,

²⁴ T.S. Eliot, The Rock (London, 1934), 75.

²⁵ See T.S. Eliot, 'Poetry and Drama', On Poetry and Poets (London, 1957), 82-3.

²⁶ See Helen Gardner, The Art of T.S. Eliot (London, 1949), 51-6.

represented by London; “then” and “there” belong to a pastoral past.²⁷ By the end of the cycle, the location of Little Gidding has become the ‘here and now’ while London is yoked with a narrative in the past tense, a remembered idea or recalled experience. Alldritt is claiming that Four Quartets overall is representative of a journey from city to country, the final location of Little Gidding having been redefined by the experience of writing the whole poem. It is an ingenious piece of closely argued analysis and tempting to ally such transformations with, for example, the reworking of a second subject into the tonic key in the recapitulation of a sonata form movement. Alldritt does not do this but does suggest that the procedures of sonata form are behind this kind of redefinition of terms by developing them in different contexts. It is also perhaps congruent with the knowledge of musical forms that Eliot might have had from articles in The Criterion by J.B. Trend.²⁸ The dialectical element of a sonata form structure, opposite ideas synthesising into a new whole, also fits the general tone in Four Quartets of a progression and renewal through philosophical paradoxes.

A conception of Four Quartets around the principle of musical sonata form foregrounds the aspect of development by redefinition and contrast. A cyclical model is also possible, either as part of, or independent from, sonata form by which each quartet is interrelated and interdependent. As in music, a dominant characteristic of this technique is redefinition by restatement of previous material in transformation or in an altered context. In this case, development is through rearrangement and repetition. Connections between the poems are easy to spot – the links in imagery between ‘East Coker’ and ‘The Dry Salvages’ and between ‘The Dry Salvages’ and ‘Little Gidding’ in the use of the sea and the yew tree, respectively, the development of the theme of travelling in each quartet, the gathering together of all themes of the cycle in ‘Little Gidding’, which in turn creates new meanings, and also the developments of the same theme within each quartet. Development is also achieved by the repetition of contrasts between levels of discourse within the whole poem, and of the similar structures of the four separate poems. An article by K. Verheul focuses on the way meaning is built-up in both music and words by patterning over time. According to Verheul, “The main structural principle of *Four Quartets* is a continual

²⁷ Alldritt, 92-8.

²⁸ See especially J.B. Trend, ‘Questions of Form’, The Criterion, vol.11, 43 (January 1932), 282-8, also referred to in the next chapter.

rearrangement of what has gone before through what comes after”.²⁹ Re-sequencing and repetition are the architects of the ultimate meaning of a poem – “...as we read or listen to a poem, we become gradually aware of a pattern in the meanings and we try to reconstruct the pattern continually as we proceed through the poem by rearranging in our memory what has gone before” (Verheul, 282). This is a similar process in music and as one of the main ideas in Four Quartets is how language relates to meaning, its form as a long and sustained development is also its content. If one sees Four Quartets as a reaction against The Waste Land, one sees it as an attempt not to write beyond language but to write outside literature, to divorce the writing from the literary self-consciousness that characterises the allusive and dense style of The Waste Land, and instead write *about* the process of writing itself. When issues of language outside a literary framework become dominant, comparisons with non-verbal language, such as music, become more plausible and this is perhaps a meaning behind Eliot’s remarks, referred to in the next chapter, that he wished to get beyond poetry as Beethoven had got beyond music.

In the later play The Cocktail Party, Eliot adopted a three-act form which, like Four Quartets, becomes circular in effect as Edward and Lavinia’s party at the play’s conclusion complements and contrasts with that at its opening. The line, “every moment is a fresh beginning” is also redolent of the voice in Four Quartets which Keith Alldritt names as the prophet. This idea of a circular or cyclical form is explored further with relation to analogies and to the music of the East in the succeeding chapter. Although it is essentially a structural matter, I have decided to continue the discussion of cyclical form after certain analogies with pieces and composers have been made in the first part of Chapter Three, in order to strengthen the comparisons.

²⁹ K. Verheul, ‘Music, Meaning and Poetry in “Four Quartets” by T.S. Eliot’, Lingua, vol.16, 3 (July 1966), 279-91, (284). Cited as Verheul hereafter.

Joyce

Musical structures in Joyce's work are most obviously observable in Ulysses, especially if one goes out looking for them. A knowledge of Joyce's interest in music is a strong incentive to search for, and find, parallels with musical forms in this novel, not only in the 'Sirens' episode but in other sections and in the design of the novel as a whole. Aside from Finnegans Wake, most discussion of Joyce's use of musical structures centres on Ulysses, and this is my primary source for analysis. There are, however, some valid points to be made on this subject about other Joyce works.

Eliot recognised the acute differences in style between A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and other contemporary prose when he found the technique to be "...omitting much detail that other writers would think it necessary to put in".³⁰ This comment from his introduction to Joyce in The Listener points out the kind of compression in method, a technique which avoids the conventional "waypoints" of syntax and description. This, as has been seen, is also a feature of Eliot's own poetic method and one that has correlatives in musical organisation. Although one might say that Ulysses is a novel which includes much detail that other writers would think it necessary to omit, the method is largely a development of the style of Portrait. The detail which Eliot implies, relating to syntax and clarity of meaning, is further pared down in the later novel as it becomes overloaded with factual detail relating to character and place. From the early stages of Portrait there are indications that the reader must be alert and bridge the gaps himself. These are mainly passages in which the young Stephen's thoughts run into one another and blend with the narrative voice. The lack of explanatory syntax mimics the speed at which different thoughts occur and shows language to be just as important an experience for Stephen as the experiences it is describing, especially so with words such as "apologize" and "admit", which become motifs with associated meanings.

Although the style of Joyce's writing in Portrait moves with the development of Stephen's mind, there is a constant tendency towards ellipsis. Passages denoting the free association of words are more direct in earlier parts of the novel as Stephen is younger, and therefore less articulate:

³⁰ T.S. Eliot, 'The Approach to James Joyce', The Listener, vol.30 (October 14, 1943), 446-7, (446).

Sorry because he was afraid. Afraid that it was some disease. Canker was a disease of plants and cancer one of animals: or another different. That was a long time ago then out on the playgrounds in the evening light, creeping from point to point on the fringe of his line, a heavy bird flying low through the grey light. Leicester Abbey lit up. Wolsey died there. The abbots buried him themselves. (Portrait, 22)

A similar instance of association later in the novel evinces a denser description:

While his soul had passed from ecstasy to languor where had she been? Might it be, in the mysterious ways of spiritual life, that her soul at those same moments had been conscious of his homage? It might be. (222-3).

There are also rapid movements of thought in the later style but these are less obvious because of Stephen's late-adolescent verbosity. The earlier, barer style anticipates the language of Ulysses more readily. In the third section of the novel, the sermon on hell, quotation is used to blur the distinction between voices for certain material.

Throughout Portrait the reader is required to pay close attention in order to identify which voice is speaking, in whose words, and with what purpose. It is this kind of explanatory detail which I think Eliot had in mind.

Even in the earlier Dubliners there is a disjointedness of style reflecting the general sense of dislocation that the stories convey about Dublin. Sentences which remain unfinished or unconnected are mainly used to show an opportunity missed or the inadequacy of self-expression, frustrating the sense of identity. Joyce's free indirect style, which frees the narrator from weighty reporting language, is one of his most concise effects. In 'An Encounter' it combines with the first person narrator to evoke the world of a boy's dream – "Mahony said it would be right skit to run away to sea on one of those big ships, and even I, looking at the high masts, saw, or imagined....." – while Gabriel in 'The Dead' represents a character thinking in an

essentially similar way later in life, as he frets over his speech – “He would only make himself ridiculous.....They would think that he was airing his superior education. He would fail with them....”.³¹ After the exposure and exercise of this free indirect style in Dubliners and Portrait, a loosening of the classical rules of narrative, as repetition, harmonic and melodic sequences, orthodox key relationships and regular phrasing are avoided by the experimental composer, Joyce opened the way for a style of ellipsis more concentrated and highly flavoured in Ulysses.

I shall now look at how this tendency developed in Ulysses and what musical structures are to be found there, which is to be the main focus of this section. Critical commentary on these matters began somewhat negatively with an article by Terence White, who states in 1936 that “It is in vain to look in Joyce for any recognition of the symphonic element in music.”³² White likens Joyce’s word-compounds and verbal suggestion to chord-building in music and describes the ambiguous opening of the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ episode as a series of wind instrument effects suggestive of flutes, clarinets, horns and bassoons (White, 166). The article is based largely on generalisations about music and subjective analyses of passages from Finnegans Wake (then Work in Progress) evaluating how satisfying the effects of the prose are.

Musical analogy did not determine Joyce’s overall scheme in Ulysses although comparisons have been made with the model of sonata form as the most obvious parallel, notably by Ezra Pound in the year of its publication.³³ Another critic to offer an analysis of the novel as sonata form is Don Noel Smith, who sees the first six episodes as an exposition, episodes seven to fifteen as a sustained development modulating through various new styles, beginning with the deviant “headlines” in ‘Aeolus’, the ‘Eumaeus’ and ‘Ithaca’ episodes as a recapitulation, with ‘Penelope’ providing a coda. This is essentially the same framework as Robert Boyle used some seven years earlier to discuss the novel’s structure in these terms.³⁴ Additionally,

³¹ See James Joyce, Dubliners (Harmondsworth, 1956), 21 and 177.

³² Terence White, ‘James Joyce and Music’, The Chesterian vol.17, 128 (July-August 1936), 163-6, (164). Cited as White hereafter.

³³ See Ezra Pound, ‘James Joyce et Pécuchet’, Mercure de France, vol.156 (May-June 1922), 307-20. Although the reference is brief and Pound swiftly moves on to discuss the father and son theme, he cites Joyce’s novel as part of “...la grande classe de romans en forme de sonate, c’est à dire, dans la forme: thème, contre-thème, rencontre, développement, finale” (313).

³⁴ Robert Boyle, ‘Ulysses as Frustrated Sonata Form’, James Joyce Quarterly, vol.2, 4, 247-54. Cited as Boyle hereafter.

Boyle contends that the whole novel is based around a struggle between two themes, or subjects, as is the essence of sonata form. Stephen represents the first theme, occupying the first three episodes, Bloom the second, completing the exposition in the second three. Furthermore, the tendency in nineteenth-century analysis of musical sonata forms to assign masculine characteristics to the first theme of a movement and feminine ones to the second has a correlative in Joyce's portrayal of the female side to Bloom – especially emergent in the 'Circe' episode. However, at the recapitulation according to Boyle, which also includes 'Eumaeus' and 'Ithaca', Bloom is the dominant tonality while that of Stephen is lost. Hence the standard musical procedure, whereby the second theme assumes the 'home-key' of the movement, is inverted. Traditional sonata form is said by Boyle to be "frustrated" and 'Penelope' is seen as huge coda, perhaps in a new (truly female) tonality. Boyle draws up detailed plans to support his theories that the novel is based on the five-part musical form, claiming that the themes of "Usurper", "History" and "Reality" are ideas which run through each of the five sections.

This conception of the novel overall as mimetic of sonata form gains credibility when first and second subjects, Stephen and Bloom, are considered as the ego and alter-ego of Joyce himself, thus turning the novel into a dialectical quest for the true self. However, a disclaimer in Boyle's article warns against too exact a parallel that, "This consideration of the book as sonata form is merely a didactic method designed to help perceive its actual structure".³⁵ This comment is not merely cautious, but a helpful manifesto generally for inter-disciplinary study. By using a fully worked-out structure belonging to one discipline as a template for analysing the structure of another, one is not compelled to equate one with the other. Recognising similar, but not identical, qualities in a structure from another discipline illuminates understanding of the initial structure and what makes it unique. Smith has a more useful application for this necessary scepticism over exact parallels when he suggests that if the novel's ground plan does not correspond precisely to the details of its musical analogue, its validity as a system is no less plausible when Joyce's interest in similar theories is considered: "...the use of music as a system could be seen as quite compatible with the use of certain other systems: in history, certainly Vico's cyclic theory; in philosophy perhaps

³⁵ Boyle, 252.

Hegel's dialectic".³⁶ A governing principle in both Ulysses and Finnegans Wake is a return to the beginning of the process, and Smith's whole theory becomes particularly interesting when we apply it to music and suggest that the general principles behind sonata form - thoughts or ideas presented, argued over and then synthesised - might mean something beyond just the music. As was witnessed in Eliot's poetry, a dialectical note is prominent involving rebirth from the conflation of opposing principles. However, the philosophising in Four Quartets is enacted with more earnestness than Joyce, leading the reader to the belief that a grand design exists and was intended by Eliot. Ulysses is a study in possibilities, including that of infinity, and thus it is less important if two systems seem to conflict – cyclic forms, which suggest stasis, and dialectical forms, which suggest progression and goals.

The 'Sirens' episode of Ulysses took Joyce five months to complete. The overall structure involves the imitation of polyphony in music, though critical opinion is not in agreement as to the exact form of polyphony which is being used as a model. Different voices enter at staged intervals and combine in various ways to suggest simultaneity of thought (from Bloom's point of view) or of action. The episode occurs at a key juncture in the structure of the novel as a whole. Throughout Ulysses Joyce's structural development gives the reader the impression that time is always expanding. From 'Sirens' onwards the lengths of the episodes becomes severely disproportionate to the timescale they are representing. The novel, as Hugh Kenner remarks, was never designed to be wholly understood by any one reader for it contains too much information and so reading it becomes "an experience comparable to that of experiencing the haphazardly evidential quality of life".³⁷ The totality of Ulysses is not meant to be grasped, being a continually thickening labyrinth, the further the reader penetrates it.

Besides the attempt at virtuosic counterpoint in words, Joyce also writes an introduction to the episode, an opening list of themes to occur in it, the formal nature of which has also puzzled and divided critics. In a discussion of the large-scale structure of 'Sirens', mention should first be made of this opening passage. The

³⁶ Don Noel Smith, 'Musical Form and Principles in the Scheme of Ulysses', Twentieth Century Literature, vol.18 (1972), 79-92, (91).

³⁷ Hugh Kenner, Ulysses (London, 1980), 80-1. Cited as Kenner hereafter.

musical term which is most often used to describe this is “overture”. This is surely a misnomer as overtures, even Wagner’s, are normally fully-worked out, often sonata form pieces, which have meaning in themselves. Joyce’s prelude is, without what follows, meaningless and resembles a presentation of a skeletal framework of notes before thematic flesh is grafted on. Musically, it could be said to recall Beethoven’s announcement of only the bass notes of the Prometheus theme near the beginning of the last movement of his Third Symphony.³⁸ Each line from the opening flourish is, in the body of the episode, given a context and clothed in words which give a melodic or harmonic meaning.

Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing.

(210)

becomes

Bronze by gold, miss Douce’s head by miss Kennedy’s

head, over the crossblind of the Ormond bar heard the

viceregal hoofs go by, ringing steel. (211)

Lawrence L. Levin, in ‘The Sirens Episode as Music: Joyce’s Experiment in Prose Polyphony’, rejects the term “overture” and instead argues for a hybrid of Bachian Prelude and Wagnerian Vorspiel with the reasoning that one precedes a fugue and the other contains elements of the drama to come.³⁹ Yet it is doubtful whether Joyce intended the body of the episode to be a fugue in the true Bachian sense (indeed, Levin argues that he did not), and the fragments which make up the opening seem too cryptic to be the equivalent of a Vorspiel. Taken alone, the marshalling of unrelated fragments in a collage of sound is more redolent of the early Second Viennese School, and specifically the third of Webern’s richly orchestrated but sparsely composed set of orchestral miniatures making up his Opus 6.⁴⁰ Stuart Gilbert, although himself likening the section to an overture, quotes Professor E.R. Curtius’ observation that the fragments are the exact literary equivalent of the Wagnerian leitmotif but aesthetically

³⁸ Musical example 3.

³⁹ Lawrence L. Levin, ‘The Sirens Episode as Music: Joyce’s Experiment in Prose Polyphony’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol.3, 1 (Fall 1965), 12-24, (14). Cited as Levin hereafter.

⁴⁰ Musical example 4.

unsatisfying because they are devoid of the context which their literary nature demands, a condition which is not required in music.⁴¹ A leitmotif in music makes sense abstracted from its context.

I would also like to mention Margaret Rogers' 'Decoding the Fugue in Sirens' as she has written original comments on this introduction.⁴² Her view of the overture is of a blueprint for the whole episode. Chords, and arrangements of chords to suggest keys to be used later, are identified in coded form. In each of the 63 lines of the introduction every letter which has a direct musical equivalent – i.e. letters from 'a' to 'g' – is interpreted as representing that note in music. So the first line, "Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing" yields 'bebgdeadefeegg'. The incidence of notes for each line suggests certain features of key based on the chords which can be built from these notes. Rogers notices four prominent keys which are claimed to be the keys of the fugue in 'Sirens'. Further evidence of a hidden key scheme is offered by the recurrence of "-ing" endings, meant to suggest "in g" (in the key of "g"), and similarly with 'in e, d, and a' in the word "*Naminedamine*". Rogers even distinguishes capital and lower-case letters, the former representing accidentals (such as B for *B flat*) to be employed for a particular emotional effect when referring to a character. The body of the episode is authenticated as a fugue by the entry of voices (represented by chords according to the lettering scheme) a fifth or fourth apart and these are said to be interrelated in a musically correct fashion. Rogers also posits the presence of leitmotifs, in the form of the fragments from real songs, which may or may not form a structural part of the fugue.

Rogers uses, as her basis for the idea that Joyce intended the letters to represent real musical notes, the transcribed conversation with G. Borach in which Joyce is said to have used "the technical resources of music" in a "fugue with all musical notations". Yet in this quotation the "musical notations" Joyce gives are directions of dynamic and examples of tempo/speed, rather than letter for note equivalents. Joyce may well have planned such a hidden key scheme behind 'Sirens'. Rogers' justification that written language as a representation of musical notation is the most suitable way of

⁴¹ Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses* (London, 1930), 239-40. Cited as Gilbert hereafter.

⁴² Margaret Rogers, 'Decoding the Fugue in "Sirens"', *James Joyce Literary Supplement*, vol.4, 1 (Spring 1990), 15-20. Cited as Rogers hereafter.

writing a fugue seems a little simplistic – “What is required to write a fugue? Fundamentally, the composer needs notes, the *letters* of music which in turn outline scales, chords, intervals and melodic motifs”.⁴³ Besides, there are other, less calculated ways of introducing a fugal texture which Joyce employs in this episode.

The label ‘fuga per canonem’ which Joyce assigned to ‘Sirens’ has done much to prompt analogies with musical fugues and analysis based on polyphonic techniques in general. Lawrence Levin, though, makes a clear and useful distinction between the ‘fuga per canonem’ and a true fugue in the Bachian sense. These are quite different forms in music, the former being an earlier, less-developed fugal form dating from the early seventeenth-century. Levin describes it more as canon than fugue, in that the answer to the subject in a canon is always note for note (a direct imitation) and can be at any interval, and that the canon form lacks the sectionalised complexity of the developed fugue – elements such as episodes, stretto, coda and so on. Levin presents the dilemma that Joyce used both the terms “fugue” and “fuga per canonem” to describe ‘Sirens’. A conversation with George Borach, a language student of Joyce’s, which took place on June 18, 1919, reports Joyce’s claim that “I wrote this chapter with the technical resources of music. It is a fugue with all musical notations: *piano*, *forte*, *rallentando* and so on. A quintet occurs in it too as in the *Meistersinger*, my favourite Wagnerian opera.”⁴⁴ (This is the number from the opera in which Joyce himself performed in a concert version in Trieste in 1909. It is also one of the few musical scores Joyce is known to have owned.) In a letter to Harriet Weaver written in August of the same year, Joyce states that the form is a ‘fuga per canonem’ with eight regular parts. He also writes, “I did not know in what other way to describe the seductions of music beyond which Ulysses travelled”.⁴⁵ This is the eight-part fugue in five sections that is reproduced in editions of *Ulysses* as part of the Linati/Gilbert schemata, which seems to accept unquestioningly that Joyce intended a fully worked-out Bachian fugue.

Levin rejects the idea that Joyce imitated a true fugue by dismissing Borach’s report of the conversation as inaccurate (he must have confused the terms “fugue” and “fuga

⁴³ Rogers, 15.

⁴⁴ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York, 1959), 473.

⁴⁵ Richard Ellmann ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce* (London, 1975), 242. Cited as *Letters* hereafter.

per canonem”), accepts the term ‘fuga per canonem’ and settles on canonical rules with which to interpret the episode. He chooses to treat the “eight regular parts” as *voices*. Stuart Gilbert, in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, accepts the ‘fuga per canonem’ label without questioning it, but then goes on to discuss the entry of the themes in terms of a later Bachian fugue. There is even a reference to a *stretto* near the end of the episode at the coalescence of four voices. Gilbert appears unaware of the difference between the terms “fugue” and “fuga per canonem”.

Both Levin and Gilbert make the important point that, although ‘Sirens’ is a concentrated effort at imitating simultaneously sounding melodies in words, such a thing is impossible on the printed page and places insurmountable demands on the memory and concentration of the reader. Indeed, Gilbert suggests that something *homophonic* is being produced even if the intention is for polyphony. He sees the entwining and juxtaposition of the overlapping “parts” in the episode as producing “the effect of a chord in music” and cautions that “He who reads such passages as certain cultured concert-goers prefer to hear a fugue – with the parts kept mentally distinct in four, or less, independent horizontal lines of melody – will miss much of the curious emotive quality of Joyce’s prose in this episode.”⁴⁶ Gilbert makes the point that the intellectual direction that the polyphonic side of Joyce’s “music” is taking is an abstraction of and distraction from the ‘low-brow’ musical comedy associated with the antics in the Ormond Bar. If the reader forces himself too hard to hear the separate lines, the effect of the whole, the vertical harmonic progress of the music, is lost. Gilbert writes: “To enjoy to the full the emotion of symphonic music the hearer should be aware of it as a sequence of chords, listen *vertically* as well as horizontally”.⁴⁷

These remarks make a case for ‘Sirens’ to be read on two levels simultaneously. It seems a little like the way one listens to music anyway. This is to say, not that several voices should be heard at the same time, but that another opposition is being made. Two aspects of music, polyphonic and harmonic, horizontal and vertical, the intellectual and the luxuriant, can be heard at once, representing the serious and comical sides to the novel, respectively. ‘Sirens’ occupies an important structural

⁴⁶ Gilbert, 247-8.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 248.

position in the novel. It is the first episode in which styles previously alien to the language of Ulysses manipulate its content and gradually train the reader to listen for two things at once – a narrative voice which is highly abstracted and one which is earthbound. Most of the immediate musical reward in reading ‘Sirens’ derives from recognition of sonic effects or wordplay with musical terminology. However, the split between something serious and complex which requires concentration and analysis, and whimsical games with sound which seem unplanned and relatively undemanding on the reader, reflect the tendency of the novel at this point for its quotidian content to be usurped by abstract or erudite styles.

When the ambition of Joyce’s ‘fugal’ project in ‘Sirens’ is compared with the almost random, comparatively ‘low-brow’ wordplay on musical themes, it may be felt that he recognised the former as self-defeating. Attempting to imitate a fugal form in words cannot, alone, further an understanding of those words. Combining it with musical mimicry on a different plane by this very juxtaposition defines the terms on which the novel must subsequently be read. As Bloom becomes portrayed more as an outsider, yet simultaneously becomes more valuable to the reader as an individual, it is these aspects of the character that are transmuted into the invading styles. This is, after all, by necessity. The action of the novel continues in an almost absurdly routine fashion: subsequent episodes are ‘about’ a pub argument ending with the aggressor throwing a biscuit tin, an early evening sexual fantasy on a beach, everyday activity in a maternity hospital, a typical night in a red-light district, and so on. The language needed to sustain description of Bloom’s wanderings needs to be as exaggerated as they are uneventful.

In the letter to Harriet Weaver quoted earlier, Joyce explains that the only way possible to contain the variety of action in a single day was by employing “such variation” in styles.⁴⁸ I would thus dispute Lawrence Levin’s claim that “...Joyce succeeds within the confines of the written word in creating a structurally consistent work” as the episode occupies a position in the novel at which consistency has started to break down.⁴⁹ Being the first major deviation from the stylistic norms that have so far been established, ‘Sirens’ suggests the beginning of a development section in

⁴⁸ Letters, 242.

⁴⁹ Levin, 24.

which form will challenge content, and attempts to *transgress* the confines of the written word will become dominant. Joyce seems to be aiming to disrupt rather than unify here to initiate a bifurcation in the way the novel is to be argued, by adopting a pluralistic outlook to the way music is used. Perhaps this is also consistent with a tendency from this point to foreground the loneliness of Bloom in a more formal fashion. Levin notices that the fugal method enables the parts to cluster in groups of characters pitted against Bloom's monologue, thus intensifying the sense of him as outsider. His exposure as a lonely individual contrasted with groups of other characters is certainly more noticeable in this episode, as it is in 'Cyclops', 'Nausicaa' and 'Circe'.

The polyphonic elements of 'Sirens' are illuminated more clearly when compared with the previous episode, 'Wandering Rocks'. The entire section is a kind of game with the one concept that obstructs truly accurate parallels between literature and music: time. Even the subject of this chapter – a procession – is an image of temporality and becomes a symbol of Joyce's method; the same group of people is seen by different observers from different points of view. 'Wandering Rocks' openly demonstrates the frustration of the printed text at not being able to convey simultaneous action. It is sectionalised into nineteen parts, many of which duplicate information seen from a slightly different viewpoint. If these sections were "notated" vertically like voices in a fugue, their true polyphonic effect could be heard. Yet this is not music, but words, the speed of which is controlled by the receiver, not the interpreter, and the technique seems deliberately to point this out. Much has been written on the episode as an example of the Russian formalist propensity for "defamiliarisation", whereby events are described without the logical causal and temporal links between them.⁵⁰ Molly's arm is described, "...a generous white arm from a window in Eccles Street flung forth a coin" ('Wandering Rocks', 185) but this information is repeated on the same page as if previously unmentioned – "A plump bare generous arm shone, was seen...". It is as if an animal with no memory were narrating and is the beginning of a tendency for technical process, an obsession with the cataloguing of detail to invade the narrative. Repetition, discontinuity and the lack

⁵⁰ See, for example, Karen Lawrence, *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses* (Princeton NJ, 1981), 80-90. Cited as Lawrence hereafter.

of a logically organising consciousness in this episode foreshadow the machine-like style of 'Ithaca'.

Yet there is at the end of this sectionalised episode, in the last of its nineteen sections, a hint of the comedy which is to undermine the seriousness of the 'high-brow' structural intentions of 'Sirens'. In this section Joyce plays with the idea of dispensable or potential content, the narrator describing what or who was *not* there, what was *not* said, or what did *not* happen. The viceregal carriages are "unsaluted", the rev. Hugh C. Love "made obeisance unperceived", John Wyse Nolan smiles "with unseen coldness" towards the lord lieutenant, Menton is holding a watch "not looked at in his left hand not feeling it", and the brazen ladies who "blared and drumthumped" after the cortege are "unseen". ('Wandering Rocks', 207-9) This cataloguing of what does not happen is directly at odds with the defamiliarisation technique. One suggests a narrator so well-informed that he can see the potential for events which were actually unrealised; the other posits a narrator unable to synthesise the most basic information. This seems to be another instance of self-consciousness about the act of writing, a wish to frustrate the expectations of the reader, and perhaps is an anticipation of the divisive approach to style in 'Sirens'. Karen Lawrence, writing on this episode in *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses*, feels that "The limitations imposed upon novel writing by the exigencies of plot making are ignored, and the reader's expectation of the functional relevance of narrative details is undermined".⁵¹ Although Lawrence downplays the relevance of musical material in 'Sirens', and treats it as a chapter about the workings of language, it is surely the attempt at a parallel with music in both episodes which enables Joyce to make these points.

'Wandering Rocks' and 'Sirens' are musically connected in that their attempts at a polyphonic layout of verbal material - more blatant and simple in the former, disguised in the latter - are sabotaged by a comic voice. It is the comic voice that jolts the reader back into the realisation that there is, after all, a narrative strand concerned with the advancement of a simple plot: the final section of 'Wandering Rocks' restores the reader's faith that the narrator has not become nonsensical by exaggerating his knowledge; the simple playing with musical terms in 'Sirens' is a

⁵¹ Lawrence, 88.

more direct way of keeping the reader in touch with the action in and around the Ormond Bar than presenting fugal amalgamations of words which subordinate sense to sound. Lawrence treats 'Sirens' as an extension of the "games of notation" played in earlier episodes of the novel (such as with the "headlines" in 'Aeolus' and the play script and musical score in 'Scylla and Charybdis') and not as a pure exercise in the simulation of music. She views the entire episode as a series of language variations on the fragments of the initial prelude, valuing these primarily as linguistic not musical. Ultimately, she argues, this is to show how words and meanings can be distorted through sound and demonstrates the gulf between words and music, or, at least, between sound and written language. Examples cited are the shifts in meaning from "in exquisite contrast" to "inexquisite contrast" to "contrast inexquisite nonexquisite" ('Sirens', 220), the change from "With the greatest alacrity" to "with grace of alacrity" (215) and the renaming of the Essex Bridge to "Bridge of Yessex" (215), all of which suggest a wilful diversion away from straightforward narration.⁵² The point of diverting the reader, it is claimed, is to parallel Bloom's own need to be mentally distracted from the impending meeting between Boylan and his wife.

Yet there is a sense in which the obsession with sound generally in *Ulysses* is not solely to make a point about language or particular characters, but the chance for Joyce to experiment in words with his knowledge of music. Hugh Kenner, in *Ulysses*, writes that because the sound can subvert the sense, "the balance between sound and sense is kept uneasy" due to the sheer volume of onomatopoeic effect and quotes.⁵³ Kenner is not unduly concerned with the large-scale design of 'Sirens' but instead devotes space to the border between sound and sense. Certain passages where he fails to see any sense, he describes as "mock music" (the "Pwee! A wee little wind piped eeee. In Bloom's little wee." is given as an example), and he calls the experiments "both unique and a little absurd" as he senses the beginning of self-parodic, reflexive tendencies in the novel.⁵⁴ What Kenner identifies as "absurd" seems to be a combination of the humour which Joyce wishes to introduce through music, and a gratuitously high volume of sonic experiment to satisfy not only the need for narrative distortion but his own fascination with music.

⁵² See Lawrence, 94-7.

⁵³ Kenner, 86.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 89.

When Kenner does address the problem of structure in 'Sirens', he takes on the critical assumption that the episode is in some way fugal, and seems intent on justifying this in his analysis. The continual oscillation between Bloom in the bar and Boylan's imminent assignation is seen as "counterpoint", yet couldn't this just as well be termed "juxtaposition"?⁵⁵ This is surely an example of a musical term being used in too general a sense to reflect what is truly happening musically. "Counterpoint" in music can also be either a general or a specific term. Referring to organised forms with strict rules, it becomes linked to fugue, as in the development of counterpoint through history, or courses in writing counterpoint. Loosely used, it can refer simply to one melody played simultaneously with another, or to the imitation of a melody by different voices in close succession. Yet in everyday speech it denotes a counterbalancing, one argument with another, or merely a contrasting, as in styles of building or colours of clothing. The element of simultaneity, the prerequisite of a temporal experience, disappears as soon as the word is diluted from its purely musical form. Combining thematic elements of a narrative into new compound words – "Eppripfftaph" – certainly suggests contrast but also new wholes, even if the words created do not make any useful sense or further the reader's insight into what is being described. The arrangement of more substantial thematic elements over several sentences –

Tenors get women by the score. Increase their flow.
 Throw flower at his feet. When will we meet? My
 head it simply. Jingle all delighted. ('Sirens', 225)

- or in the extended sequence combining the tapping of the blind piano tuner, the flirtation between Lydia and Lidwell, Bloom's thoughts and Boylan's journey (beginning at 231) can persuade the reader to think of several things at once, and more intensively so the more frequent the repetitions. This may, however, be termed "juxtaposition" as the time it takes to perceive the connections is of no relevance to their effectiveness. Counterpoint in music relies upon an instantaneous recognition of contrasting material.

⁵⁵ Kenner, 91.

However, there are ways in which Joyce's writing may be seen as a genuine attempt to imitate counterpoint in music. The creation of compound words is a Joycean speciality and relies on the reader apprehending more than one idea at once. Most often in Ulysses the compound words are conjunctions of existing words to make new wholes with just a single intended meaning, which assist in making one experience more immediate. These frequently refer to the senses and the 'Lestrygonians' episode is, predictably, full of them – "noonreek" (129), evoking the smell from the café, and "He smellsipped the cordial juice" (142), being two examples. Another type of Joycean compound plays with letters in a word to produce a comic effect – "base barreltone" or "Nobodaddy" (God) or "runefal" (funeral) from 'Oxen of the Sun' (322 and 348) – hinting at other meanings behind the base word. The device which is most like the simultaneous effect produced by music, is the compound word or phrase which combines two meanings, thereby offering the reader the opportunity to apprehend more than one idea in the same stretch of time. This becomes a standard procedure in Finnegans Wake, which is a constant flow of invented words attempting to convey two or more meanings at the same time. In the first paragraphs alone there are, "passencore", "wielderfight", "penisolate", "buildung", "magentic" and "magazine wall" / "maggy seen all". We are also given more punning double meanings in "Sir Tristram" (sad sheep) and "violier d'amores" (a violator of love, and the musical instrument). There are surprisingly few of these in Ulysses. 'Sirens' offers "Luring. Ah, alluring" (226) and plays with "in exquisite [contrast]" and the imagined negative "inexquisite" (220), at the same time as making other musical associations with these words. Another from 'Circe', in the name "Laci Daremo" (437), conflates a Hungarian and an Italian name to evoke the aria from Don Giovanni, which has become a motif in the novel. It is mainly in 'Sirens', as it is so directly concerned with music, and in 'Circe', where meanings are mixed-up as if in a dream, that Joyce employs these semantic fusions. As I have mentioned earlier, the poetry of Hopkins, an author who also wrote some radically experimental music, is perhaps a prototype for this attempt at counterpoint in words.

The analogies that have been found in 'Sirens' with musical harmony are evidence of another attempt at simultaneity in writing. Stuart Gilbert finds examples of "chords" from which certain notes are missing, as in the word "Blmstup" (235), which lacks the

letters “oo” and “ood”, said to represent the thirds in the chord.⁵⁶ Phrases or sentences in which the main verbs or nouns are missing – “Pat to and fro.” (223), “Gravy’s rather good fit for a.” (223), “The harp that once or twice.” (223), “Why did she me?” (226) - are also said by Gilbert to be incomplete chords. It is the reader’s task to fill in the spaces. Whilst this is not exactly an analogy with musical counterpoint, chords do represent the sounding of different notes at the same time to make a new whole, and it is this aspect of simultaneity that Joyce is addressing in such an experiment.

Critical opinion, then, has been worried by the need to define the precise musical form of ‘Sirens’. An open approach to the matter of polyphony in the novel renders the reader more receptive to the possibilities Joyce extends, ideas which may be applied beyond a mere musical analogy. Milos Zatkalik lists various ways in which simultaneity, as a general idea apart from strict fugue, is tackled by Joyce. He also discusses the musicalisation of literature as an exploration of the language of the unconscious personality, the devices of which share the characteristics of dreams and the pre-conscious development of the child’s mind.⁵⁷ Levin, on the other hand, deems it important to decide which form – fugue or ‘fuga per canonem’ – is being used, but his analysis yields a description of a process rather than furthering a literary understanding of either this episode or of the novel. Moreover, Joyce’s flirtations with the technical workings of various subjects only went so far – Einstein’s Theory of Relativity being one example.⁵⁸ It is conceivable that ‘Sirens’ is, in order to make a point about comedy, a fanciful excursion into musical theory rather than a truly earnest attempt to write a fugue in words. The writings of Otto Luening, a Zurich friend of Joyce mentioned in the previous chapter, are of some value in this respect. Born in America, Luening was later to become a composer of electronic avant-garde music with great juxtaposition of styles, but during the winter of 1918-9 was a music student and flautist in Zurich and knew Joyce at the time he was writing *Ulysses*. The two met frequently in cafes for discussions – Luening was greatly interested in the musical side of Joyce’s writing while Joyce plied Luening avidly for information about technical matters in music.

⁵⁶ See Gilbert, 223-4.

⁵⁷ Milos Zatkalik, ‘Is There Music in Joyce and Where do We Look for it?’, *Joyce Studies Annual*, vol.12 (Summer 2001), 55-61.

⁵⁸ See Andrzej Duszerko, ‘The Relativity Theory in *Finnegans Wake*’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol.32 (1994), 61-71. Although Joyce had a broad knowledge of many disciplines, the depth of this tended to be limited by the degree to which it was useful to his purposes.

In his book The Odyssey of an American Composer, Luening describes several meetings with Joyce during which the novelist increasingly discussed his musical interests and tastes. Among his recollections are memories of Joyce's passion for folk songs and bawdy songs from around the world, and even of him dancing in the Zurich streets, and the observation that he could not read from full musical scores. It is often difficult for Luening to say whether Joyce was being genuine or just controversial in his opinions of composers. On one occasion Joyce suddenly asked Luening who he thought the greatest composers were. Joyce himself declared, "For me there are only two composers. One is Palestrina and the other is Schoenberg".⁵⁹ Luening did not remember Schoenberg having been performed in Zurich at that time, only the Second String Quartet and some piano music up to 1919, so Joyce's reverential claims for his music seem a little exaggerated. It is indeed hard to reconcile this comment from Joyce with his well-known passion for Italian opera and popular song. The interest in Palestrina, as Luening points out, would have originated in Joyce's Catholic upbringing and frequent contact with Gregorian chant. Luening assumes that Joyce heard about Schoenberg's music rather than listened to it, probably from the man who introduced Luening to Joyce, Philipp Jarnach, musical secretary to Busoni and Joyce's neighbour while in Zurich. Jarnach was the most prominent teacher of counterpoint in Europe at the time and had recently engaged in a concentrated period of study of the technique in a hideaway in the Alps.

As Luening writes that during this period Joyce was "completely absorbed in *Ulysses*" (and especially in 'Sirens'), it is likely that conversations with Jarnach and Luening himself influenced the musical content of the novel.⁶⁰ A transcript of a conversation between Joyce and Luening documents the writer's interest in musical modes, the scales based on whole tones and used in much pre-Baroque music.⁶¹ According to Luening, Joyce would sing the modal scales in order to appreciate their meaning so as to incorporate this knowledge into *Ulysses*. Modes were based on the relationships of

⁵⁹ Otto Luening, The Odyssey of an American Composer. The Autobiography of Otto Luening (New York, 1980), 194. Cited as Luening hereafter.

⁶⁰ Luening, 195.

⁶¹ See Timothy Martin and Ruth Bauerle, 'The Voice from the Prompt Box: Otto Luening Remembers James Joyce in Zurich', Journal of Modern Literature, vol. 17, 1 (Summer 1990), 35-48, (38). This article is a document of an interview Luening gave at a Joyce conference in Philadelphia in 1989. Cited as 'Prompt Box' hereafter.

overtones and Luening connects Joyce's interest in overtones, in the bell-chiming passage from 'Calypso' and in another passage from 'Circe', with his knowledge of modes (see 'Prompt Box', 41-2). Overtones form patterns which can be organised into systems of sound, the structural relationships within which may become analogies with other, non-musical systems or dialectics. This certainly seems to be in Stephen's mind in the passage from 'Circe' when, having built up the idea of the interval of the fifth as the perfect image of return following a journey, through its modal functions, he applies this principle to more universal themes – the creation of the world and its ultimate return to God, the progress of the sun around the earth, Shakespeare's journey to London and return to Stratford (see 'Circe', 410-12). Although Stephen is drunk at this point and his tone pretentious, his logic in the discussion of the relationship between the tonic and dominant notes in music is consistent and recalls the symbolism behind the "Siopold" cadence in 'Sirens', another example of the tonic-dominant relationship applied beyond music ('Sirens', 227). Once again, an interest in sound alone combines with the intellectual value of musical structures and their relevance to other systems and themes in the novel.

Luening was also fascinated by contrapuntal technique. His first string quartet involved extensive use of canon and inversions, techniques first practised by early Flemish composers of polyphony, but later adopted by Schoenberg and Busoni.⁶² Joyce showed a significant interest in these procedures in Luening's quartet – "...he seemed fascinated as he heard about their application in my quartet".⁶³ Joyce was always intrigued by the common properties of words and music and by what patterns in music suggested what words or inflections in speech. Luening goes on to describe the literary "translations" which Joyce made of various pieces of music. He would regularly deconstruct pieces note by note, finding equivalent word inflections and verbal images for each note and phrase. Luening claims that from these sessions he "had learned more about the relationship of language to music than ever before or since". Sometimes these were "literary interpretations of the contrapuntal techniques

⁶² Busoni features in an article by David Herman, ' "Sirens" after Schoenberg', *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol.31 (1994), 473-95. 'Sirens' is said by Herman to reflect some of Busoni's ideas on polyphony and harmony which Joyce may have read in *Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (1907). Luening also notes Joyce's admiration for Busoni. See also Chapter Three on Busoni's influence.

⁶³ Luening, 197.

in music” which Luening judged to be exercises done to assist in the composition of Joyce’s own work.⁶⁴

If these comments show the extent of Joyce’s interest in counterpoint and the practical experiments he conducted, another remark hints at the dangers of taking Joyce too seriously. Luening writes that, “Joyce’s actual experience with music was so different from his intellectualising about counterpoint that he seemed to be two people”.⁶⁵ This is a revealing comment and supports the notion that there is a place for bathetic use of elevated material in *Ulysses*. Joyce was, no doubt, attempting to produce some form of fugal writing in words in ‘Sirens’, yet in ‘Wandering Rocks’ there appears to be a similar attempt, almost a transparent admission of failure, perhaps because it does not directly aim at an analogy with music. The very fact that Joyce chooses to focus on structure, at the expense of plot, in the second half of the novel is an admission that the writing is attempting something musical. One of the most abstract episodes, ‘Oxen of the Sun’, in its journey through the history of English literary styles, is a significant example of this. The general construction of the ‘Sirens’ episode could certainly be made to fit the design of a loose fugue, as Aldous Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* (1928) could be made to do, but it could never be simply read as such, only analysed. The mental demands are too great for the reader to grasp the fugal form. Musically, a transcription of the episode into actual sound, could such a thing be done, would produce a nonsense. ‘Wandering Rocks’, on the other hand, and ironically so, makes a point about polyphony in words with greater clarity and economy. Busoni, writing in Weimar in 1923, observed that the difference between fugue and polyphony was their respective life spans: fugue will always be associated with a particular period in history and thus seem antique when used outside it; polyphony, because it is not a form but a principle, is eternal and can therefore be used in any musical language.⁶⁶ Joyce’s greater flexibility when he writes polyphonically, as in ‘Wandering Rocks’, rewards by being more direct than the imitations of musical form in ‘Sirens’.

The musical inclusiveness of ‘Sirens’, its effort to pack in as much allusion in as many ways as will fit, is the measure of Joyce’s enthusiasm for this kind of

⁶⁴ Luening, 197.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Luigi Dallapiccola, ‘On the Twelve-Note Road’, translated by Deryck Cooke, in *Music Survey* ed. Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller, vol.4, 1 (October 1951), 318-32, (329).

experiment. It is not merely using the idea of music to make a separate point. Yet to extend Karen Lawrence's premise that music helps the episode to reaffirm its literary qualities, I shall briefly mention Timothy Martin's examination of Wagner in Ulysses, before taking up the subject again in the next chapter. Martin argues that Joyce is primarily using the device of Wagnerian leitmotif in 'Sirens', but that this device itself is one that is rooted more in literature than in music. If writers at the end of the nineteenth century, such as Dujardin in Les Lauriers sont coupés (a book Joyce owned in Zurich), looked to Wagner's continuous melody as a model for a narrative which blurred the distinctions between description, character analysis and dialogue, Wagner himself employed it precisely because it was a convenient way of dealing with large amounts of text in music. Suspecting that the term leitmotif has been overused in discussions of Ulysses, Martin argues for a stricter definition for its application in literature: "...it should form, as it does in Wagnerian opera, part of the stream of narration, or melody; it should recur and draw its various contexts together".⁶⁷ He cites the "agenbite of inwit" phrase (first encountered in 'Telemachus') as a good example of a leitmotif, in that it occasions certain emotions (such as guilt here) essential to characters in the novel and displays an unfamiliarity which makes it appear musical. The argument as to whether leitmotif is a literary or a musical technique is ultimately circular, but if it fails to make Ulysses a more musical novel, in Martin's words it certainly makes it more Wagnerian.

As will be seen in the next chapter, one of the reasons for omitting a discussion of the musical aspects of Finnegans Wake from this study, aside from reasons of space, is that its method falls more obviously within the post-modern aesthetic. Similarly, the musical analogues to this work, both in terms of structure and actual pieces, are to be found in music written in ways which are both more radical and more highly individual, qualities facilitated by the spirit of that age. The corporate aesthetic of Modernism has disappeared by this time. However, a short essay by Joyce from the early 1930's is worth mentioning in concluding this chapter for its musical content and for the germination of the technique used in Finnegans Wake. In 1932 Joyce published the short essay, 'From a Banned Writer to a Banned Singer' in The New Statesman and Nation. It is simply an attempt to promote the career of an Irish-French

⁶⁷ Timothy Martin, 'Joyce, Wagner, and Literary Wagnerism' in Ruth Bauerle ed. Picking Up Airs. Hearing the Music in Joyce's Text (Urbana and Chicago, 1993), 105-27, (120).

tenor, John Sullivan, whom Joyce had met in Paris in 1929 and considered to be unjustly ignored in England, and, as may be presumed from the title, to further interest in his own Work in Progress. Like the 'Sirens' episode in Ulysses, the essay contains frequent references to famous singers and to words and plots from operas, notably Rossini's William Tell, in which Sullivan had a significant success.

Understanding the meaning behind much of the piece requires the reader to recognise the allusions to these storylines, and the piece has been seen as a parody of Wagner's Tannhäuser. It also needs to be read aloud. Without hearing the words the numerous puns on musical terminology are easy to miss – "Ballaclavier"/Balaclava and "be flat"/B flat for example.⁶⁸ Another double pun in the line "And T. Deum sullivamus" connects the composer Arthur Sullivan with the singer and subject of the essay, and with the form of the Latin hymn, *Te Deum Laudamus*. It is indeed possible that for this essay Joyce was using the model of the *Te Deum*, a musical adaptation of a rhetorical form. The piece is divided into short sections, contains frequent exclamations of praise (ending with a parody of the National Anthem), and as a whole reads like a hymn of praise or thanksgiving in rhythmic prose. Whatever the motives behind it, the essay stands out amongst Joyce's occasional prose for its density of allusion, often musical, and its stylistic individuality.

§

This chapter has covered the more technical issues of how music was incorporated into the work of Eliot and Joyce. Having discussed these in terms of sound and structure, and having mentioned a few composers specifically in passing, it is now necessary to assess in more detail the relevance of parallels with particular composers and pieces of music. Matters of structure will, of course, overlap into this area but I hope I have explored the main issues in the text above.

⁶⁸ James Joyce, 'From a Banned Writer to a Banned Singer', The New Statesman and Nation, vol.3, 53 (February 27, 1932), 260-1.

THE CASE FOR ANALOGIES

This chapter will consider the influences of particular composers and particular pieces of music on Eliot and Joyce. The choice of analogues is far from clear-cut, and examples will be given of music which is both contemporary, or near-contemporary, with the writing and which is anterior to this but which can be said either to share elements of the same aesthetic, or to have had some significant influence on the writer concerned. It is impossible to ignore the effect of Beethoven's music on Eliot, and this will be considered at some length, as well as the likely parallels with the string quartets of Béla Bartók. The relationship between Eliot and Stravinsky will be covered in the next chapter as it is of a more biographical nature, and as there is some overlapping on the subject of musical settings. Influences on Joyce were far more various and remain tenuous. This will be addressed, but with a focus on Schoenberg and, unconventionally, a member of the Bach family. As Wagner was recognised by both writers, perhaps a mandatory influence for the time, Eliot and Joyce will be discussed together in this respect, albeit in a limited fashion. Additionally, I would like to keep a place in this chapter for the interest that both Eliot and Joyce had in philosophies of the East, and the extent to which music of the East plays a part in this and in the development of the Modernist aesthetic in general.

Eliot and Beethoven

There is a lengthy critical catalogue of supposed musical influences on Eliot induced partly, one suspects, by unspecific references to music in his own prose. One commentator even argues for a line of descent from Berlioz through Wagner to Eliot, citing a passage from Berlioz's Mémoires, published in 1870, in which fragmentary quotations in different languages are juxtaposed with the French original.¹ This is claimed as a source for The Waste Land, ballasted by the fact that Berlioz was of interest to Wagner, who in turn had an influence on Eliot's poem. However, such

¹ A. Jonathan Bate, 'Berlioz in *The Waste Land* (and *Tristan* beside it)?', Notes and Queries, new series vol.30, 4 (August 1983), 331.

insights must remain speculative as there is little other evidence to support an interest in Berlioz. Eliot's interest in Beethoven is of great significance because he mentions his name on several occasions in prose works and it is known that he read about and listened to works by the composer. So it is to Beethoven that I shall turn first.

The tradition, long extant, of comparing Four Quartets with the late Beethoven string quartets, especially Opus 132 in A minor, is hard to substantiate. There is no firm evidence that Eliot, in any of the poems, was attempting a parallel with a particular piece of music. Hugh Kenner, in The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot, refers to this habitual association as "an empty custom".² A letter Eliot wrote to Stephen Spender in 1931 certainly proves his interest in the A minor quartet:

I have the A minor Quartet on the gramophone, and I find it quite inexhaustible to study. There is a sort of heavenly or at least more than human gaiety about some of his later things which one imagines might come to oneself as the fruit of reconciliation and relief after much suffering; I should like to get something of that into verse before I die.³

This is clearly more than a passing interest, but cannot support the number of close analogies that have been attempted with this piece of music and claim a direct and demonstrable influence. Stephen Spender begins this tradition in a piece on Eliot and Beethoven in The Destructive Element (1935) by comparing the Opus 132 quartet, not with any of the Four Quartets, yet to be written, but with Ash-Wednesday.⁴ Spender knew J.W.N. Sullivan's book, Beethoven: His Spiritual Development (London, 1927), which was well known to Eliot, and quoted it in the essay. It is proposed by Herbert Howarth that Eliot spoke to Spender about Sullivan's book and that Spender interpreted this as an influence on the recently completed Ash-Wednesday.⁵ Spender sees structural technique in both Eliot and Beethoven as servant

² Hugh Kenner, The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot (London, 1960), 261. Cited as Kenner hereafter.

³ Letter to Stephen Spender, 28 March 1931, in Stephen Spender, 'Remembering Eliot', Encounter, vol.24 (1965), 3-14 (10).

⁴ Stephen Spender, The Destructive Element (London, 1935), 149-52.

⁵ Herbert Howarth, Notes on some figures behind T.S. Eliot (London, 1965), 287. Cited as Notes hereafter.

to “the expression”, rather than independent of this. However, his discussion of the similarities between Ash-Wednesday and the A minor quartet is, in musical terms, superficial. Spender observes two general similarities: (i) the changes in metre in the poem’s second section, from long lines to short and back to long, are compared with the trio section of Beethoven’s second movement - this basic A-B-A ternary structure is a principle of organisation used repeatedly by composers long before Beethoven; (ii) “the extraordinary conjunctions of mood” of Beethoven’s last quartets generally (a point from Sullivan’s book), a comment on the number of movements in contrasting styles (a characteristic of two other late Beethoven quartets) which Spender then loosely applies to “effects” he notices in Ash-Wednesday. Neither of these is specific enough to the string quartet in question.

Of writers on Eliot who discuss the parallel between the A minor quartet and Four Quartets, Herbert Howarth is one of the more persuasive but ultimately fails to convince. He has valuable comments in both Notes on some figures behind T.S. Eliot and in the article ‘Eliot, Beethoven and J.W.N. Sullivan’.⁶ In the latter, Howarth considers the five-movement structure common to Beethoven’s work and each of the Four Quartets, stating that in ‘Burnt Norton’, “Eliot reproduced this formal scheme” (CL, 322). Eliot’s choice of the A minor quartet - and Howarth seems sure that this was a conscious choice - he claims was directed by his reading of Beethoven’s own inscription above the slow movement: “Heilige Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit...”. In Howarth’s opinion, the recovery from illness referred to by Beethoven parallels Eliot’s own recovery from creative doubt in the early 1930’s:

As he reflected on Beethoven’s final style, to which he had been drawn by the theory that an artistic medium ultimately becomes transparent in the hands of a master, Eliot realized that he must attempt that transparency on the model of the *A minor Quartet*, for that was also the highest example of a hymn of thanks for safe passage through the dark.⁷

⁶ Herbert Howarth, ‘Eliot, Beethoven, and J.W.N. Sullivan’, Comparative Literature, vol.9 (1957), 322-32. Cited as CL hereafter.

⁷ CL, 324.



He gives brief descriptions of how musical and literary material might correspond – “he attempted ... to find a verbal equivalent for the elusive gusts of the strings by choosing images and rhythms that imply quickness and elusiveness” and “His second section candidly attempts the three-four impetus of a late Beethoven scherzo, and his “trilling wire” image is a grasp at the excited pitch of the music”.⁸ Unless we know with greater certainty that Eliot had this model of Beethoven’s in mind, or that the characteristics of the music Howarth mentions are unique to this particular Beethoven quartet, such comparisons remain only subjective guesswork. Furthermore, the comments on Beethoven’s second movement seem more relevant to that of the Quartet in B flat, Op.130 than Op.132, the latter being more measured than excited in pitch. The architectural similarities of A-B-A form noted by Spender are here applied by Howarth to ‘Burnt Norton’, although Howarth ultimately finds ‘East Coker’ the most convincing poem of Four Quartets to be following the pattern of Beethoven’s Op.132.

In his later book, Notes on some figures behind T.S. Eliot, Howarth is at his most persuasive in the way he considers Eliot to be evolving a form with each successive poem in Four Quartets. He attempts to find close parallels between ‘Burnt Norton’ and the A minor quartet as if the music were a catalyst to the development of a structure Eliot could again confidently command on the same model in subsequent poems. Howarth breaks down the structure of the music and of ‘Burnt Norton’ into short descriptions of the five movements. Yet the similarities are somewhat forced by the language with which Howarth chooses to compare them: “allegro” (first movement of the Beethoven) and “rapid first movement” (‘Burnt Norton’); “scherzo and a contrasting trio” (Beethoven) and “a scherzo ... followed by a contrasting section” (‘Burnt Norton’); “a very short alla marcia” (Beethoven, 4th movement) and “a very short rhyming lyric” (‘Burnt Norton’, 4th movement).⁹ To use the term “scherzo” at all seems, at best, approximate. The Beethoven movement, actually marked ‘*Allegro ma non tanto*’, is, in playing time, about as long as the first movement, weightier than equivalent movements of the late quartets, and tranquil in mood. Certainly, in terms of musical tradition the term “scherzo” is acceptable in its

⁸ CL, 322.

⁹ Notes, 279.

looser definition, yet to apply it to a piece of poetry deflects attention to its connotations of jokey light-heartedness which are not present in the music here.

J.W.N. Sullivan's book is a firmer starting point for Howarth. He argues that the text "heighten[ed] his [Eliot's] conception of the last quartets" and points to similarities between the language of the book and that of Four Quartets.¹⁰ The idea that references by Sullivan to Beethoven as an "explorer" have a correlative in "Old men ought to be explorers" ('East Coker', V) is an attractive possibility.¹¹ So too is the suggestion that the end of 'The Dry Salvages' (I) – "And the ground swell that is and was from the beginning, / Clangs / The bell." – is a possible result of another of Sullivan's descriptions, the end of the A minor quartet's first movement: "as only Beethoven would end with what sounds like a startling and celestial trumpet call".¹² Even more likely is that Eliot contrived the 'axle-tree' simile in 'Burnt Norton' (II) from Sullivan's text, simply because it is a more rarely-used word.¹³

There seems a more insistent linguistic and thematic influence from Sullivan, though, and that is of the theme of consciousness. In a highly reverential discussion of the last quartets Sullivan repeatedly uses the word "consciousness". He finds the music to be of supreme spiritual remoteness. Beethoven is said to be exploring new regions of consciousness and a new inner world is developing independent of the outer one which produced his earlier compositions. Sullivan emphasises the uniqueness of this music's spiritual content by foregrounding the notion that the mind, if it has occasion to do so (such as through deafness), can generate new territories of consciousness. He then describes the results that thinking through these regions produces, revealed in the architecture of the central group of three last quartets:

The connection between the various movements
is altogether more organic than that of the four-
movement sonata form. In these quartets the movements
radiate, as it were, from a central experience.

¹⁰ Notes, 286.

¹¹ Ibid. 288.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

In each quartet many elements are surveyed, but from one central point of view.

It [the substitute finale for Opus 130] does not belong to the same region of consciousness as the fugue.¹⁴

Sullivan suggests that the turning away from conventional sonata form in these quartets is a turning away from a conventional way of thinking, “a very fundamental and general psychological process.”¹⁵ These remarks on Beethoven’s creative methods are comparable with some of Eliot’s comments from the early to mid 1930’s on consciousness and music in the creation of poetry, notably the passages quoted in Chapter One from The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism and ‘The Need for Poetic Drama’. Sullivan also helps to illuminate Eliot’s slightly cryptic words from the unpublished New Haven lecture of 1933, quoted by Matthiessen in The Achievement of T.S. Eliot (1935), in which he compares his aims at getting “beyond poetry” to Beethoven’s striving to “get beyond music”.¹⁶ I feel Eliot had Sullivan’s chapter on the last quartets in mind when he wrote these words. The notion that poetry should be “so transparent that in reading it we are intent on what the poem *points at*, and not on the poetry...”, coincides with Sullivan’s interest in what musical structures *represent* in terms of human consciousness, rather than what they *are* in terms of pure music.¹⁷ Eliot’s words from the lecture would also seem to announce certain lines from ‘Burnt Norton’:

I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.

Time past and time future
Allow but a little consciousness.
To be conscious is not to be in time.
(‘Burnt Norton’, II)

¹⁴ J.W.N. Sullivan, Beethoven: His Spiritual Development (London, 1927), 113-4 and 115. Cited as Beethoven hereafter.

¹⁵ Beethoven, 112.

¹⁶ F.O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T.S. Eliot. An Essay on the Nature of Poetry (London, 1947), 89-90. Cited as Achievement hereafter.

¹⁷ Achievement, 90.

In reading Sullivan's book, Eliot would have gained more than just an appreciation of certain works by Beethoven. As well as a considerable amount of biographical background to the music, Sullivan also adopts a philosophical tone of enquiry to examine the nature of music itself. The book as a whole would have appealed to anyone interested in the wider place of music and the part Beethoven played in this, in both the 1820's and the 1920's. In the Preface, Sullivan is keen to point out that Beethoven's character and his experience of life were as important to the listener as his music. He saw Beethoven's experiences as continually modifying the whole of his work and elevates the last quartets as the supreme spiritual expression of a sustained and organic development of an artist. It is possible that Eliot's focused interest in these works is partly a result of reading Sullivan's assessment of them and may have prompted an ambition to realise, or at least attempt, a similar climactic project in his own Four Quartets.

Sullivan was also careful to diagnose what he termed the "mental climate" of the age in evaluating Beethoven's output. He considers in some depth the position of music in a wider aesthetic context before discussing Beethoven. This leads into a debate on the qualities of music in general, in which the subject of poetry often arises. Poetry is considered as equally abstract as music: "The effect of a poem can no more be described than can the effect of a musical composition". (Beethoven, 24) His belief is that music is unique, but not completely isolated from the outer world and thus is arguing for unique *aspects* of different art forms. Neither poetry nor music is isolated, they both have links with the objective world: "Poetry, no more than music, can be paraphrased, but that fact does not testify to the existence of a unique and isolated poetic faculty". (Beethoven, 24) Sullivan uses this connection with poetry to substantiate his claim that the most valuable type of music is not that which is so pure and abstract that it exists in isolation, but that which "...spring[s] from a spiritual context and express[es] spiritual experiences". (Beethoven, 28) It is this type of music which maintains enough of a connection with the outer world without becoming dependent upon it, as is the case with programme music. Sullivan appears to be saying that this kind of music can reveal its greatness to the sensitive non-specialist listener, such as Eliot, without compromising its musical integrity. Beethoven is portrayed as an exceptional communicator, beyond the bounds of his own art – "Beethoven most certainly regarded his music as expressing states of consciousness which might

conceivably have been expressed by some other art". (Beethoven, 32) Such is the dilemma facing the voice of the philosopher in Four Quartets, whose struggle with words and meanings seeks their transcendence in the quest for their spiritual meaning. Getting "beyond poetry" is, like getting "beyond music", to find a means of writing it that communicates beyond the isolation of pure poetry, something of universal spiritual significance, but without losing its uniqueness as poetry.

However, although Sullivan's text may have influenced Eliot to some degree in the composition of Four Quartets, it shows Eliot's interest in ideas about Beethoven. It does not show poetry being suggested by the music. In the earlier article from Comparative Literature Howarth is more thorough in arguing Sullivan's linguistic influence, compiling a list of nine separate points of similarity. The last of these draws attention to Beethoven's lack of facility with language as a spur to Eliot's ongoing debate in Four Quartets between the poet and the words he employs.¹⁸ This is not a true comparison of ideas as Beethoven's struggle with language was different from Eliot's. Eliot engages in a debate through various speakers with verbal language. This language is something he knows he already has great facility with. The debate attempts to find a way of expressing an experience beyond this language. Eliot saw the structural principles of music as a silent assistant to the verbal debate - from the deeper, less articulate level referred to in the extract above from The Listener. Sullivan's remarks suggest that Beethoven's difficulties with verbal language may have intensified his sensitivity towards a musical one and heightened his perception of the linguistic aspects of music. They do not indicate that Beethoven was involved in a philosophical-linguistic enquiry. This seems to be necessarily the case with Eliot in much of Four Quartets. He is always aware of the many levels of verbal language, from the mundane or inadequate to the transcendental. He is able to build the transcendental, or the attempt to express the transcendental, with tools which have previously proved to be inadequate, as at "That was a way of putting it - not very satisfactory...." ('East Coker', II) This is also the case in The Family Reunion where pedestrian language is used to break up the intensity of the poetic language, a source of much of the play's comedy. As Eliot himself prescribed, "...in a poem of any length, there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to

¹⁸ CL, 330.

give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole...".¹⁹ The inadequate for Beethoven is a language of another kind, a verbal one, and plays no part in his search for the transcendental.²⁰

Another critic who makes reference to Beethoven's Op.132, some nine years earlier than Howarth, is D. Bosley Brotman in an article of 1948. Brotman spends most of his text on the general idea that each poem in Four Quartets follows a design "analogous to that of the classical sonata form at its apogee as exemplified in the last quartets of Beethoven".²¹ In the final two pages of the article he turns to a straight analogy between the fourth movements of 'East Coker' and Op.132. 'East Coker' is claimed to be the most eligible poem for the model of circular form because of the final modified return to its opening line. Brotman's terminology, however, is loose. "The classical sonata form at its apogee" suggests sonata form subjected to the most expressive or refined treatment the form will allow, as in Mozart's last two symphonies or Beethoven's middle-period symphonies. With Beethoven's last quartets there are moves *away* from traditional sonata form as forms unexpected in string quartets appear – marches, recitative, dances and fugues among them. When Brotman states that "It is apparent upon casual reading that each of these four poems has in a large sense the basic structure of a string quartet" there is no definition of this structure, if it can be said to exist.²² "Basic principles" would have been a safer comparison. Brotman guides us through three-part A-B-A forms and the use of *da capo* or "return" (his terms) to highlight a circular form. Even if Brotman wishes to proceed along the lines of a comparison with orthodox sonata form (which I do not regard Beethoven's late quartets as examples of – and, interestingly, Sullivan speaks of the central three quartets as "not in sonata form"), this terminology does not describe its most distinguishing features.²³ These features are, as I have said before, those of contrast and of development, about which Eliot published an article in The

¹⁹ T.S. Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry', On Poetry and Poets (London, 1957), 32. Cited as 'Music' hereafter.

²⁰ It is, however, of interest that Beethoven supplies verbal clues to the meaning of the music on two occasions in the late quartets: the heading above the central movement of Op. 132, and the words "Muss es sein?" "Es muss sein!" ("Must it be?" "It must be!"), in the last movement of Op. 135. The addition of a text to the Symphony No.9 also seems to be an indication that Beethoven wished to reach beyond the abstraction of pure instrumental forms.

²¹ D. Bosley Brotman, 'T.S. Eliot: The Music of Ideas', University of Toronto Quarterly, vol.18, 1 (1948), 20-29, (20). Cited as Brotman hereafter.

²² Brotman, 22.

²³ Beethoven, 112.

Criterion in 1932 by the music critic J.B. Trend.²⁴ A three-part A-B-A form suggests more a minuet/scherzo-and-trio structure, or a song with a contrasting middle section. Such a model is too simplistic to illuminate sonata form in any meaningful way.

Whilst the recapitulation, Brotman's "return", is an important element of sonata form, it is not a defining characteristic, more a gesture of recognition. The recapitulation in a sonata form movement is not the beginning in the end because it is not the end of the movement. What Brotman has in mind when he talks of circular form is more akin to cyclical form in which related material is reused across movements and shown to be as much present at the end as at the beginning.

Brotman analyses the poetry of 'East Coker' more sensitively when not troubled by musical references. A problem with terminology weakens the analysis again when the third movement is described as a "theme and variations".²⁵ Of all musical forms this is probably the most easily "translatable" into verbal language because it is so vague. Fundamentally, the principle is statement then decoration. How the composer executes the decoration has limitless possibilities – contrapuntally, harmonically, by rhythmic diminution or augmentation, by choice of instrumentation, combination of voices, and so on. There is simply not enough evidence to claim that 'East Coker's third movement's various references to darkness constitute the verbal equivalent of musical theme and variations any more than 'Burnt Norton' (I) does with the idea of time. What is more, the term "theme and variations" could just as easily refer to a verbal arrangement, in which an initial idea is subject to embellishment, as to a musical one.

The turn towards a specific musical parallel near the end of Brotman's article typifies a tendency in critical thought to justify Op.132 as Eliot's model for 'East Coker' on the basis of the brevity of the fourth movements in each. Brotman seems alert to ambiguity of form in this section: "The fourth movement is a pure transitional device...This fourth part is a complete form in itself, but in a sense not a real movement at all. It is a bridge-like form, in mood and length a transition between two

²⁴ J.B.Trend, 'Questions of Form', The Criterion, vol.11, 43 (January 1932), 282-8, (282). Cited as 'Questions of Form' hereafter. The article includes a detailed evaluation of the principles of sonata form, which Eliot is likely to have absorbed.

²⁵ Brotman, 26-7.

larger, more completely elaborated movements.”²⁶ This is not merely trying to have it both ways. It is true that the Beethoven movement is formally incongruous – a march and a passage of lead-in recitative. The sudden changes in mood and rhythm are noticeable in both Eliot and Beethoven, and Eliot’s conventional paradoxes are as unsatisfying poetically as Beethoven’s brusque march is musically. There is certainly an argument for a common use and treatment of accepted forms. Yet is this really enough to justify a comparison of ‘East Coker’ with the whole of Op.132?

Beethoven’s “alla marcia” is, after all, a sudden call for action following the long hymn in the previous movement, and also contains rhythmic and thematic elements from the first movement. Furthermore, it is hard to find a place in Eliot’s poem for the passage of dramatic recitative which follows the “alla marcia” section and forms a (musically) logical lead-in to the final movement, unless we think of the beginning of Eliot’s fifth movement as sharing the qualities of a recitative – being between speech and song, an advancer of narrative, a commentary, a drier more prosaic interlude. The musical effect of Beethoven’s recitative, however, is a sudden mood change, from the strictly measured to the passionately unpredictable.

John Holloway, in his contribution to The Fire and the Rose. New Essays on T.S. Eliot (Oxford, 1992), acknowledges both Kenner’s “empty custom” remark and his reference to Bartók’s quartets, to which I shall return later. Like Howarth in his book, and Elisabeth Schneider in her chapter on Four Quartets in T.S. Eliot. The Pattern in the Carpet (Berkeley, 1975), Holloway starts with the unpublished New Haven lecture of 1933 (quoted by Matthiessen), mentions Howarth’s assessment of Sullivan’s influence and then, interestingly, moves to verbal manifestations in Beethoven’s late quartets. A connection between Beethoven’s heading for the last movement of Op.135, “Der schwer gefasste Entschluss” (“The decision hard to take”) and the final section of ‘Little Gidding’ is tenuous.²⁷ Holloway’s second idea, that the heading of Op.132’s third movement relates to the motif of sickness and health in Four Quartets, is actually used by Howarth in the Comparative Literature article referred to above, as a clue to the genesis of Four Quartets. However, Holloway’s application of this idea

²⁶ Brotman, 27.

²⁷ John Holloway, ‘Eliot’s *Four Quartets* and Beethoven’s Last Quartets’, The Fire and the Rose. New Essays on T.S. Eliot eds. Vinod Sena and Rajiva Verma (Oxford, 1992), 145-59 (148). Cited as ‘Last Quartets’ hereafter.

to 'East Coker' (IV) is as plausible in speculative thought as Howarth's comparison of this movement with the 4th movement of Op.132.

Like Howarth, Holloway sees the third section of 'East Coker' as musically analogous to a theme and variations movement. He adds an interesting analysis of 'The Dry Salvages' (II) with similar conclusions but without fully defining the nature of musical theme and variations, either generally, or as Beethoven uses this. As with Howarth, the difficulty is with the term and to what extent it is a form or a procedure. Holloway, though, is far more musically aware and the ensuing analysis of the fugal qualities of the dawn encounter passage from 'Little Gidding' is informed and original. I find the idea that Eliot was attracted by the application of fugal forms to poetry appealing. Holloway quotes the reference to counterpoint in 'The Music of Poetry'. To add to this there is also the word "fugue" which Eliot used next to the word "sonata" in the article, 'The Need for Poetic Drama' (1936), quoted in Chapter One. These Eliot clearly deems the paramount musical forms. Holloway's analysis claims that Eliot is presenting the themes of dawn and the compound ghost as fugue subjects with each incidence of these themes subtly varied and dovetailing with each other.²⁸ The degree of detail with which this notion is presented makes it a seductive one. Yet I think Holloway leaves behind the central idea that a fugue has as its chief interest the simultaneous presentation of *different* ideas. Eliot's themes seem to be closely connected in that the dawn is the setting for the meeting with the ghost figure, so it is not surprising that references to this should recur at various points in what is now a narrative.

One of the more sceptical and imaginative critics to look at the influence of Beethoven on Four Quartets is Stanley M. Wiersma.²⁹ He rightly rejects the conveniently accepted parallels with Op. 132, suggesting that the Beethoven model, if there has to be one, must be a more conventional example of a classical string quartet. The late quartets are not good models as they are already radical departures from a structure, or pattern, which has taken many decades to develop. To quote Wiersma,

²⁸ 'Last Quartets', 155-7.

²⁹ Stanley M. Wiersma, ' "My Words Echo Thus in your Mind": T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and Beethoven', Concerning Poetry, vol.13, 1 (1980), 3-19. Cited as Wiersma hereafter.

To get the benefit of abstracting, a poet picks as clear a model as possible to abstract from; there is no value - aesthetic, intellectual, psychological, and especially not communicative – in abstracting from abstractions.³⁰

A much earlier Beethoven quartet is selected for comparison, the last of the Opus 18 set, no. 6 in B flat. Eliot's work, according to Wiersma, is like the earlier quartets in that each poem has the same form, whereas Beethoven's late quartets change in form with each successive work. Furthermore, this particular early quartet is both conventional and unusual. It is in the conventional four movements but has an unusually extended slow introduction to the final movement. Wiersma sees this section as formally ambiguous – is it a separate movement or just an introduction? (I would claim here that, as this slow music is repeated within the succeeding fast music – the “last” movement – it is therefore only a part of this movement, in the way that the slow introduction to the quartet Op. 130 is incorporated into the first movement.) It is then argued that Eliot's fourth movements in Four Quartets also have a presence in his fifth movements, and are thus similarly ambiguous. Wiersma is certainly right to suggest that the slow introduction to Op. 18/6, entitled *La Malinconia*, makes a better analogue for the lyrical fourth sections of Eliot's poems than the military “alla marcia” from Op.132. This is with the possible exception of “The dove descending...” lyric from ‘Little Gidding’, being set in wartime London.

But there are, of course, many other connections of this kind within all the poems of Four Quartets – in ‘Burnt Norton’ alone, the line “At the still point of the turning world” is carried into the fourth movement from the second, and the motif of sunlight is developed in the fourth and fifth movements from its initial appearance in the first. The whole of each poem and the work as a cycle of poems develop in this way. Recurrence of a theme in music, across movements in a pre-romantic work, is a much rarer event and so the comparison is not entirely a like one.

If we are to look among the last quartets for a possible model, it could be said that Beethoven's quartet Op.135 follows a similar pattern. It too has a slow introduction to the final movement, which also recurs within the faster music, and is even supported

³⁰ Wiersma, 5.

by a text – *La Malinconia* is the heading for the slow music from Op. 18/6, while the later quartet is supported by the “Muss es sein?” / “Es muss sein!” headings, part of the “Der schwer gefasste Entschluss” (“The decision hard to take”) argument posed at the head of the final movement. Whether these inscriptions were intended with any metaphysical seriousness, or whether they were merely a whimsical jest, is undecided by various commentaries on Op. 135.

Wiersma has a valid point in general terms, that the model for a transformation of a basic musical structure into a verbal one was more likely to have been one of the early, more conventional examples, just as Beethoven himself used them as bases for his own Op. 132. The argument is further enhanced, even supported, by Wiersma’s citation of Eliot’s reference to “the early work of Beethoven” in a note on Romeo and Juliet appended to ‘Poetry and Drama’, and by pointing out J.W.N. Sullivan’s advocacy of four-movement forms as general creative structures, on account of their resembling psychological processes at large. However, Wiersma is tempted, like Howarth and Brotman whom he criticises, into like-for-like equations between Beethoven movements and Eliot’s poems. Not content with a general similarity in overall form, he pairs the rhythmic ambiguity of Beethoven’s scherzo movement in Op. 18/6 with the alternating themes of spiritual/physical journey in Eliot’s third movements. Even if there were connections of mood and length, this would be a hazardous link, for the confusion in the music is generated purely by the rhythmic disruption of setting two beats against three. Furthermore, the effect of this is playful and fully congruent with the label “scherzo”. Eliot’s equivalent sections are just too substantial in content and length to bear comparison to a scherzo, especially if one is advocating that Eliot is consciously adapting an aspect of this music in this way.

Similarly, the respective first movements are claimed to share characteristics. Wiersma calls the first subject of the Beethoven quartet “restless” and the second reflective – this is, of course, true of many a sonata form movement – with a later section combining both elements. Analogues are found in each first movement from Four Quartets. Yet if we examine the opening of ‘Burnt Norton’ we find a reflection or meditation on time, which contains none of the agitation of Beethoven’s opening subject. It only becomes animated at “Shall we follow? / Quick...”, and Eliot’s own

reading supports this.³¹ And because there is no recognisable return to the main theme(s) in Eliot's first movements, Wiersma claims that he has deliberately "truncated" or "eliminated" the recapitulation in these sections. It is somewhat dangerous to assume that Eliot had a strict sonata plan in mind to begin with, which he then modified.

Wiersma ends with the interesting thought that The Waste Land was conceived as a quartet structure. It is certainly a structural model for Four Quartets, but was Eliot really too "embarrassed" at the earlier work's formal shortcomings as a piece of "music" to call it a quartet?³² The basis for the idea is Eliot's remark in the unpublished New Haven lecture of 1933, that he had "long aimed" at getting "beyond poetry", as Beethoven in his latest works, strove to get beyond music".³³ Wiersma is supposing that the idea of the musical quartet in words was born much earlier to Eliot and that the appearance of Sullivan's book on Beethoven shaped this into a more direct parallel. I firmly agree with Wiersma on the notion that Sullivan's articulation in non-technical language of the versatility of the four-movement form and its application to general artistic expression, without detailing the finer structures *within* a movement was appealing to Eliot. That this "would be liberating to any poet attempting to imitate quartet structure in poetry", accords with what is known of Eliot's knowledge of music.³⁴ It is also furthering the case for more conventional quartets as analogues, given that most of the late Beethoven works are not in four movements.

However, there is one further point that Sullivan makes about structure in the late Beethoven quartets, which Wiersma touches on, and could be made more central to his argument. This is the discussion by Sullivan of the non-linear nature of the late quartets, according to which all the elements are related to one central experience. This "radiation" of material, rather than progression, is what gives the work, or works, unity: "It is not any kinship between the experiences described in the movements

³¹ T.S. Eliot, T.S. Eliot reads The Waste Land, Four Quartets and other poems (London, 1971), a reissue of previous recordings made for Caedmon Records. Cited as Eliot reads hereafter. See later in this chapter for fuller recording details of Eliot reading his own work.

³² Wiersma, 15.

³³ Remarks from the unpublished letter on 'English Letter Writers' quoted earlier, given in New Haven, Conn., in 1933, in Achievement, 89-90.

³⁴ Wiersma, 16.

themselves, but the light in which they are seen, that gives to these works their profound homogeneity”.³⁵ While the comments on four-movement form would seem more practically useful to Eliot, these remarks might have seemed attractive to the poet seeking a form to express transcendental material, or a form which could articulate the ultimate impossibility of this, while at the same time hinting at a goal. If the reader sees a “still point” mapped out as an aim he does not necessarily have to reach it.

This awareness of non-linear music in Sullivan’s book can be linked with articles that Eliot published in The Criterion in 1926 and 1932.³⁶ The former is by Stanley Rice and contrasts the linearity of a traditional Western approach to musical form, with the Western view of Eastern models as circular, “radiating” structures. What Rice terms “formlessness” may well be the kind of non-progressive, non-linear technique which Sullivan describes:

But as our knowledge of the East grows there seem to be traces of the influence of Indian music in the modern art of Europe. The so-called formlessness of many recent compositions is probably not formlessness at all, but a new kind of form to which we have not yet grown accustomed.³⁷

The second, by J.B. Trend, the regular music contributor to the periodical at the time, suggests that listening to contemporary music demands an approach akin to that for “Oriental” music. In the article, ‘Questions of Form’, from the same year, Trend contrasts stillness and movement in music in a similar manner to ‘Burnt Norton’ – “What distinguishes noise from music is the shape, the pattern, plan, design, form”.³⁸ I shall return to these articles and matters of form influenced by the East later in this chapter.

³⁵ Beethoven, 154.

³⁶ Stanley Rice, ‘Hindu Music’, The New Criterion, vol.4, 3 (June 1926), 538-51 and J.B. Trend, ‘The Oxford History of Music’, The Criterion, vol.11, 45 (July 1932), 698-704. Cited hereafter as Rice, and ‘Oxford History’, respectively.

³⁷ Rice, 550.

³⁸ ‘Questions of Form’, 282. This is not the first time that language from Four Quartets seems to echo that from Trend’s Criterion articles – see also Chapter Two, page 74n.

Besides furthering interest in the relevance of Sullivan's book to Eliot's poetry, Wiersma has directed attention away from just "the late quartets of Beethoven", a label of comparison which has come to be used gratuitously and unanalytically. By opening up possible analogues with other quartets or quartet principles, Eliot's musical ambitions appear more realistic. Such an approach to the question of Beethoven's influence on Eliot is surely more prudent. From his many references to Beethoven it must be supposed that his genius was admired, and that this admiration had a place in Eliot's conception of poetry as an art, but especially in Four Quartets. It is this work which shares with the Beethoven string quartets many general features of creative composition without the need for one-to-one analogies.

Eliot and Bartók

I have so far tried to show, by reference to a few critics on the subject, the difficulty of drawing an analogy between any single poem in, or the whole of, Four Quartets and a specific piece of music. Before turning to work which has been done on the influence of Bartók's music on Four Quartets, I will mention one other writer on Eliot and Beethoven whose non-committal stance and quotation of Sullivan yields a sensible reading and provides a lead-in to Bartók. Elisabeth Schneider, in T.S. Eliot: The Pattern in the Carpet, views the potential analogies more generally and cites the number of movements within a finished work as a key idea to this. According to Sullivan, musical structures which are in more than four sections expand on a conventional linear progression, radiating from one "dominating, central experience".³⁹ This is suggested to be the case in three of Beethoven's last quartets and, by Schneider, in two of Bartók's quartets. She herself feels the musical inspiration of Four Quartets to be "a composite of the late quartets of Beethoven, particularly the C sharp minor (Opus 131) and the A minor (Opus 132), [and] probably the Bartók quartets which have been described as modern developments

³⁹ Elisabeth Schneider, T.S. Eliot: The Pattern in the Carpet (Berkeley, 1975), 173. Cited as Schneider hereafter.

from the late Beethoven...”.⁴⁰ Behind these comparisons are verbally articulated ideas about form in Sullivan’s book, not analytical equations postulated movement for movement.

The Bartók quartets were certainly regarded as a Beethovenian legacy. The Hungarian composer Mátyás Seiber wrote in 1945 that they were his most representative works, which “...form the backbone of his whole output; they show in a clear line the growth and development of the composer. In this respect Bartók reminds us of Beethoven.....Bartók, too, seems to express his most essential thoughts through the medium of the string quartet”.⁴¹ János Kárpáti, in his book on the quartets, devotes a whole chapter to the influence of Beethoven’s string quartets, finding parallels with Op. 131, Op.132, Op.135 and the Grosse Fuge.⁴² Comparisons with Beethoven were routine and are likely to have found their way into general musical conversation. As early as 1922, when only two of the quartets had been written, Philip Heseltine (alias Peter Warlock) published an article in The Musical Times praising the first two quartets as Bartók’s best works and the most interesting in the genre since Beethoven.⁴³ Ten days later, the composer arrived on the first of several visits to Britain.

It must first be stated that, in terms of direct analogies, the connections between Four Quartets and the string quartets of Béla Bartók are even more spurious than those with Beethoven’s, simply because of the paucity of references to this music in Eliot’s prose or in critical sources. This need not discourage readers or listeners who think they find similarities, however. Elisabeth Schneider, in the above-mentioned book, comments on the organic structures in Bartók’s fourth and fifth quartets and how they were modern equivalents of late Beethoven.⁴⁴ Hugh Kenner’s reference to M.J.C. Hodgart’s information on Eliot’s interest in Bartók penetrates no further than “Eliot is reputed to have said that he was paying attention chiefly to Bartók’s quartets, Nos. 2-6”.⁴⁵ This remark is picked up by John Holloway in his essay in The Fire and the Rose. New Essays on T.S. Eliot, cited earlier in connection with Beethoven. There is

⁴⁰ Schneider, 170.

⁴¹ Mátyás Seiber, The String Quartets of Béla Bartók (London, 1945), 3.

⁴² János Kárpáti, Bartók’s String Quartets translated by Fred Macnicol (Budapest, 1975), 21-7.

⁴³ Philip Heseltine, ‘Modern Hungarian Composers’, The Musical Times, vol.63 (1922), 164-7.

⁴⁴ Schneider, 170.

⁴⁵ Kenner, 261.

a short discussion centring on number of movements and thematic links as points of comparison between Bartók's music and Four Quartets, but Holloway refuses to draw any similarities in tone or feeling.⁴⁶ Peter Ackroyd writes of Eliot's "especial affection for the music of Bartók" when listening to gramophone records in the late 1950's.⁴⁷

A more thorough investigation of the Bartók connection is made by Mildred Meyer Boaz in her dissertation on Eliot and various musical influences. Boaz is careful to state initially that Eliot's poetry is an abstraction, in that there are no direct parallels between the poems of Four Quartets and identifiable pieces of music, and that "instead, the structural development displays the musicality of Eliot's poetry".⁴⁸ Even though she spends a lengthy chapter on equivalences between Bartók quartets and Four Quartets, this is not a contradiction of Boaz's earlier argument: the analysis is there to show what parallels *could* exist – "Some of the poetry is similar to particular pieces of modern music, and a comparison of these pieces yields insights into the development of modern art, in particularly poetry and music."⁴⁹

However valid as a theory, this last remark is far too generalised to support an analogy along paradigmatic lines. The core of an argument exists but needs developing. To what extent can analogies with particular pieces be made when it is known that Eliot cannot have studied or, at best, heard these pieces prior to the publication of Four Quartets? Kenner's citation, through Hodgart, of the Bartók quartets 2-6 as the chief area of interest may have arisen through a general awareness of these works among readers of arts journals and concertgoers. Certainly the main area of structural interest lies with the fourth and fifth quartets – the use of five-part arch structures and transformation of themes. But Bartók as a musical intellect, who has extended the boundaries of creative composition to embrace non-European principles, must also have a place in terms of an influence on Eliot.

⁴⁶ 'Last Quartets', 157.

⁴⁷ Peter Ackroyd, T.S. Eliot (London, 1984), 322. Cited as Ackroyd hereafter.

⁴⁸ Mildred Meyer Boaz, T.S. Eliot and Music: A Study of the Development of Musical Structures in Selected Poems by T.S. Eliot and Music by Erik Satie, Igor Stravinsky and Bela Bartók. PhD. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1977. Ann Arbor, 1977, 193. Cited as Boaz hereafter.

⁴⁹ Boaz, 193.

Bartók was known in English intellectual circles as an experimentalist who used quarter tones and non-European rhythms, combined with 'Western' forms, and was written about in The Criterion as early as 1925. Critic J.B.Trend remarks on "an oriental feeling for rhythm with a sense of form which is definitely European"⁵⁰ and the following year extends the discussion on rhythm by comparing Bartók's use of folk-song with Vaughan Williams'.⁵¹ It is likely that Eliot's interest in Bartók would have been furthered by an article in Scrutiny (March 1941) by W.H.Mellers. Here Mellers cites Bartók as a prophetic voice in the future of music, in that radical novelty is still being contained by traditional forms:

For the technique explored in his recent works reconciles a legitimate extension of the classical, eighteenth-century, melodic conception of dissonance with principles of line-drawing comparable with those of Asiatic music, so that he provides as it were a compromise, a half-way house, between two musical worlds – not so much between western and eastern as between the traditional European world and the hypothetical, more international, future that may be presaged in some duodecuple music.⁵²

Scrutiny went to some trouble to promote the cause of Bartók. In the same year Mellers wrote a review of a recording of the second string quartet, comparing it with late Beethoven quartets in its questioning of musical structure, again mentioning an Asiatic element, and singling out the fourth and fifth quartets as "the most significant".⁵³ In 1945 the reissues by Boosey & Hawkes of miniature scores of the quartets 2-6 again prompted Mellers to praise Bartók's contribution to modern culture: "these works....taken together constitute probably the most original and logical example of sustained musical thinking in contemporary music."⁵⁴ The following year the journal also published a review of a recording of the fifth quartet.

⁵⁰ J.B.Trend, ' "Atonality" and Quarter-tones', The Criterion, vol.3, 2 (April 1925), 433-5 (433). Cited as 'Atonality' hereafter.

⁵¹ J.B.Trend, 'Spain and Hungary', The New Criterion, vol.4, 1 (January 1926), 154-60.

⁵² W.H.Mellers, 'Mahler as Key-Figure', Scrutiny, vol. 9, 4 (March 1941), 350.

⁵³ W.H.Mellers, 'Bartók on Wax', Scrutiny, vol.10, 1 (June 1941), 88-90.

⁵⁴ W.H.Mellers, 'Bartók Quartets', Scrutiny, vol.13, 3 (Autumn-Winter 1945), 240.

Only the material from The Criterion antedates the composition of Four Quartets so any direct influence of the music on the poetry must have stemmed from other sources. The reason for Hodgart's / Kenner's citation of the quartets 2-6 may have been through Mellers' comments in the Scrutiny article or Eliot's reading of them and subsequent mention of these pieces. That Eliot read Mellers' 1945 article in Scrutiny seems likely as Kenner suggests that the remark on the quartets 2-6 was passed directly from Eliot to Hodgart. There is evidence in this journalism for a commentator to suggest that Eliot became interested in Bartók's music after the composition of Four Quartets, yet the dissertation by Boaz suggests certain direct structural and textural parallels between the music and the poetry.

It is uncertain whether Eliot was in any way familiar with the fourth or fifth quartets (those generally agreed to parallel the structure of each poem in Four Quartets) before or during the period of the poems' composition – 1934-42. Although Bartók finished the fourth and fifth quartets in 1928 and 1934 respectively, the first vinyl recordings were not issued until c1947, with the Guilet Quartet giving a reading of no.4, then c1948, with the New Music Quartet playing no.4. The Kolisch Quartet's version of no.5 was issued in 1941. There is no record of Eliot having attended performances of any of Bartók's quartets in Britain prior to 1942, but these did occur and anyone with at least a general interest in music would have been aware of them. After much delay, the second quartet was performed in London on two occasions in 1925, by the Hungarian Quartet and Pro Arte Quartet, and was first broadcast by the BBC in February 1926, again in a performance by the Hungarian Quartet. A BBC studio performance of the third quartet took place on 12 February 1929 with the Kolisch Quartet (it was also performed the following week at the Wigmore Hall), whilst the fourth quartet was given its world radio premiere by the Hungarian Quartet on the BBC on 22 February 1929. The BBC first broadcast the fifth quartet on 1 December 1935.⁵⁵

Recognition of Bartók's achievements also came in the literary world. Ezra Pound, in Guide to Kulchur (1938), made an analogy with the fifth quartet, citing it as an example of culture, comparing it with Beethoven's music and claiming that it suffered

⁵⁵ For full details of these performances see Malcolm Gillies, Bartók in Britain (Oxford, 1989), esp. 70 and 150-1.

similar problems of form as his own Cantos. Like much of Pound's music journalism, this sounds like posturing, though Eliot may have read it.⁵⁶ However, Pound was present at the first European performance of the fifth quartet, given by the New Hungarian Quartet at the ISCM Festival in Barcelona in 1936, and commented in The Listener later that year that the piece was "a complete and coherent structure. It is like no other quartet.It projects from the preceding borders and frontiers of quartet composition...".⁵⁷ Eliot would certainly have read these comments, which may have fuelled an already nascent interest in Bartók.⁵⁸

Such a lack of evidence for conscious influence may not preclude the presence of a matrix of intellectual thought common to creative artists of the period. Eliot was certainly of the opinion that artists belonging to different times and disciplines shared a degree of communal thinking which was below the ordinary level of consciousness – "Between the true artists of any time there is, I believe, an unconscious community".⁵⁹ The relationship between poet and musician was especially close to Eliot as he had on many occasions found the musical elements of poetry to be at an unconscious level. Passages quoted earlier from 'The Need for Poetic Drama', the essay from The Listener in 1936, published just after Pound's comments on Bartók's fifth quartet, and The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933) – the passage on the "auditory imagination" – may be compared. There is also the claim in 'The Music of Poetry' that the rhythmic basis for a passage is conceived before its birth into words: "... a poem, or passage of a poem, may tend to realize itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words...".⁶⁰ While Eliot is not saying that a musical instinct is responsible for a literary product – the rhythm he means here is a poetic one, not a musical one – the implication seems to be that an idea in abstract form precedes its concrete form. A comparison could thus be made with the abstract nature of music, independent of external associations. It would be too facile to say that Eliot is suggesting that entire musical structures could be

⁵⁶ Ezra Pound, Guide to Kulchur (London, 1938), 134-5.

⁵⁷ Ezra Pound, 'Mostly Quartets', The Listener, vol.14 (October 14, 1936), 743-4.

⁵⁸ There is further comment by Pound on Bartók's fifth string quartet in Music and Letters in the following year. According to Pound, Bartók's attempt to break conventional artistic moulds in the 1930's was similar to the position the writer felt himself in in 1905-6. Ezra Pound, 'Ligurian View of a Venetian Festival', Music and Letters, vol.18, 1 (January 1937), 36-41.

⁵⁹ T.S. Eliot, 'The Function of Criticism', Selected Essays 1917-1932 (London, 1932), 23-34, (24).

⁶⁰ T.S. Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry', On Poetry and Poets (London, 1957), 32.

transmuted at a sub-conscious level into their verbal equivalents, especially in a non-trained listener such as Eliot. His prose comments on music do reveal, though, a frustration with the elusiveness of music's effects on a writer, and suggest that music is more influential than he is able to account for.

Musicians and poets are both producing structures which are contingent upon the related principles of time and change. Time is often the element which separates the existence of one idea from its transformation into another. In music the string quartet is a genre which, if not intrinsically so, has been developed as a medium for concentrated transformation and working out of material. The set of quartets by Bartók is an especially lucid and compact example of the essence of the genre, the quartets 4 and 5 challenging the intellect with a particularly dense concentration of material. Much happens in a very short period of time, for example the numerous themes and transformations in the fourth movement of the fifth quartet in a mere four-and-a-quarter minutes. These quartets, like some poetry, make a direct effort to foreground structural principles and the re-ordering of themes. There is thus, in this music, a certain commonality with operations of linguistic thought.

It is on these grounds of a common sensibility with similar aesthetic practices and goals, but different materials, that Boaz proceeds to compare the fourth and fifth quartets of Bartók with Four Quartets. The bases for the study are similarities of structure and texture and the patterns which both produce. Like any critic who attempts an analytical analogy in the knowledge that there is no consciously intended parallel, the writer of this study aims to further the reader's understanding of the principles and structure of Four Quartets by comparison with a work she deems similar in construction.

The overall structural parallels are clearly seen. Both the fourth and fifth quartets employ a five-part arch structure, at the centre, or apex of which is, respectively, a slow movement and a scherzo movement. In both quartets the material of the outer movements and of movements two and four is similar, the themes being developed or transformed in some way on their later appearance. In the case of the fifth quartet, the second and fourth movements are arch forms in themselves, forming A-B-C-B-A structures where the B and A themes are inverted or modified on their return. The fact

that the same chord progressions are made in each movement for each of these themes further tightens the control Bartók has over the whole structure.

It is a common practice for Eliot in *Four Quartets* to practise a progressive modification of both individual words – the phonetic patterns they produce – and phrases. This occurs not only within, but also across the poems in the cycle. The most blatant example is from the first and last lines of ‘East Coker’ – “In my beginning is my end” changing to “In my end is my beginning”. In the first and last movements of ‘Burnt Norton’ there are correspondences with the themes of sunlight, dust, children and laughter. The phrase “At the still point of the turning world” is used as an introductory idea in the second movement of ‘Burnt Norton’ and as the concluding line of the fourth. In ‘Little Gidding’ the theme of fire and the symbol of the dove are carried from the second to the fourth movements.

The phonological transformations are more subtle but Boaz has pointed them out as correlatives to Bartók’s thematic development. For example, the sound patterns made in ‘Burnt Norton’(IV) with “cloud”, “clematis”, “clutch”, “cling”, “curled”, “bell”, “black”, “sunflower”, “will”, “tendril”, “light”, “silent”, “still”, and “word” and the phonetic development of words in ‘East Coker’(IV) – using the letters f and ood as motifs in the progression from “flesh” and “blood” to “Friday” and “good” – are eventually related to the arrangement of themes in the first movement of the fifth string quartet.⁶¹ The three themes are presented and then revisited in reverse order, yet it seems more tempting to see this as a parallel in sheer sound. Both Eliot and Bartók are concerned with the development of motifs or fragments. In the slow movements of the fifth quartet (the second and fourth), the themes are made up of fragments which are transformed across movements – the trills of the second movement become pizzicato notes in the fourth (first theme), the sustained chorale chords become tremolo chords (second theme), and the third theme is transformed into a canonic variation, its accompanying trills into a scale. Thus the fourth movement becomes a free and much expanded version of the second movement.

⁶¹ Boaz, 168.

In Four Quartets the development of material is not just within, but across the poems, one of the defining elements of a cycle. Boaz points out that the idea of darkness in 'East Coker'(III) is an intensification of what has been said previously in the preceding poem and that unheard music is a link between 'Burnt Norton' and 'The Dry Salvages'. Furthermore, the material for 'Little Gidding'(V) is a culmination of images and motifs used in all the preceding poems – rose, fire, smoke, ashes, dust, the children in the apple tree, the hidden laughter and the idea of stillness.

That this notion of a shared cyclical unity between Bartók and Eliot should be so important to Boaz's argument seems to be its major flaw. This is because in the Bartók quartets there is no feeling of a cycle, in the true sense of an interrelated group of pieces, beyond the similarities in structure in the fourth and fifth quartets. It is retrospective critical comment, and possibly the existence of sound recordings, which has grouped them as such. The word 'cycle', as applied to these works, has come to signify an autobiographical record of artistic development, much as Shostakovich's quartets are now seen. Furthermore, what Boaz sees as "transformations" are often no more than mere logical developments. For example, in 'The Dry Salvages'(II) the change from "soundless wailing" to "voiceless wailing" does not alter our interpretation of the word "wailing", as Boaz implies by using the word "transformation".⁶² This is simply playing with repetition and variation. Also, the six-note motif which dominates the first movement of Bartók's fourth quartet, later seen to be a rhythmic basis for the whole quartet and thus repeated at the very end of the piece, is compared by Boaz to the initial and final phrases of 'East Coker' as the "central paradox of that poem".⁶³ This is surely a rhetorical tool used by any artist whose argument is subject to the passing of time, i.e. poets and musicians. It happens in many pieces of music, organically composed, from other eras, such as Franck's Symphony in D minor, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, or Dvořák's Ninth Symphony. If the argument for a common artistic consciousness is still being used in allying Bartók's music with Four Quartets, the procedures must be more specific to the *period* than this.

⁶² Boaz, 174.

⁶³ Ibid. 170.

In the few sources on Eliot and Bartók that are more than mere passing comments, the focus of any study has mostly been on the fourth and fifth quartets. The five-part structure is interesting because it is analogous not only to each poem in Four Quartets but also to The Waste Land. One critic who finds a place for a parallel with Bartók's sixth quartet, premiered in New York on 20 January 1941 by the Kolisch Quartet, also addresses the problem of how the cyclic element in Eliot's poems might be compared with music. Genesis Jones, in Approach to the Purpose, compares the whole of Four Quartets as a single structure, with the sixth string quartet.⁶⁴ Much has been said about this quartet's poetic and melancholy nature, and of how it is Bartók's last farewell to a lost past, written during the composer's mother's final illness and in the months leading to war in Europe. However, Jones focuses on the structural similarities rather than the spiritual ones.

The common element is a motto theme in each which weaves through the structure. In Bartók it is a melancholy theme first heard on the viola at the very beginning of the piece, later becoming subjected to multi-part settings as an *idée fixe*. By the final movement, *Mesto* ('sad', and the label which the theme carries whenever it appears), the theme is passed around the four instruments together with fragments of the first movement. Not only is the beginning in the end, but the whole has been built from a small part.

Eliot's "motto" according to Jones is the idea of the rose-garden, an earthly paradise. This is first presented in 'Burnt Norton' and developed in subsequent poems as a "structural element":

It seems likely that Mr. Eliot applied this structural element, not to the individual movements of the poem, but to the four large poems which constitute *Four Quartets*. He first heard Bartók's quartet shortly after it was written in 1939.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Genesis Jones, Approach to the Purpose: A Study of the Poetry of T.S. Eliot (London, 1964), 263-5. Cited as Jones hereafter.

⁶⁵ Jones, 263.

Jones then relates the idea of using recurrent themes to Eliot's comments in 'The Music of Poetry' (1942), in which this is seen as a natural compositional process in both poetry and music, and makes the assertive conclusion, "And so we may see clearly enough how Mr. Eliot has used in *Four Quartets* a structural control borrowed from Bartók's *Sixth String Quartet*".⁶⁶ This conclusion is a little too comfortable in that it ignores the fact that 'Burnt Norton' was published four years before the string quartet was written, assumes that Eliot heard and absorbed enough of the work's artistry in time to apply it to his own poetry between 1940 and 1942, and makes a somewhat strained case for a motto-type development in *Four Quartets*. The theme of the rose-garden is significant in 'Little Gidding' and the rose is developed as a symbol there, but in the two central quartets it is hardly a motto theme. 'East Coker' and 'The Dry Salvages' contain brief references to the symbol of the rose but do not develop the rose-garden as an image at all. Although there are ideas connected with it – transience and the lost experience – this is not the same as presenting or developing it as an image. In the Bartók quartet we hear the motto theme in all movements – in different voices, pitches, rhythms or transformations, but still recognisably that theme and not just an idea connected with it.

Jones' theory is quite a bold one and for it to work there should be closer parallels than these. What is really shown here is that an idea used at the beginning of a work has been recapitulated at the end in a different form. However, *Four Quartets* is a work that is structured through the development of motifs. There is not a single unifying image but many, which occur at intermediate points in the cycle to cement connections and modify meanings. Both Beethoven and Bartók built structures which progressed by using short motifs or fragments. They are also both composers who laid innovation over traditional frameworks and produced some of their most original work through the string quartet medium. The reason why Eliot showed interest in these two composers is likely to be through reading the same kind of critical comment on their work that is currently invoked to justify parallels between the poetry and the music.

⁶⁶ Jones, 264.

The method of construction through motivic development is more inherently a musical process than a literary one. When Eliot used the phrase “musical pattern” it is likely that he had in mind a method of writing which used words as a musician uses notes, through the repetition, modification and varied distribution of single words, short phrases, rhythms and sounds. To appreciate the effects of these patterns it is helpful to read the poems aloud or listen to sound recordings.

Eliot made recordings of his poetry on several different occasions. Earliest recordings date from 1933 at Harvard, during the time he delivered the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures. Four Quartets was recorded complete in 1946 for HMV, and again, with other poems, at Harvard in 1949 as part of a project to record poets reading in the Harvard Library. Much of the poetry was also recorded for Caedmon Records in 1955. Radio recordings were also made for NBC in the 1950’s of representative works. Eliot himself chose to indicate his scepticism of the authenticity of recordings in a comparison with music:

A recording of a poem read by its author is no more definitive an interpretation than a recording of a symphony conducted by its composer.....
What a recording of a poem by its author can and should preserve is the way the poem sounded to the author when he had finished it.⁶⁷

On the recordings reissued by the HarperCollins label, Eliot gives a more relaxed reading of Four Quartets than the almost incantatory performance of The Waste Land.⁶⁸ Yet there are few major changes of rhythm or pitch in the voice to mark out the different sections of each quartet or to indicate the many levels of discourse. In the reading of ‘Burnt Norton’ there is a clear stress on “first world” in the first movement, as if indicating the beginning of a new section. Yet, as this is not followed by other stresses to denote other divisions, it seems to function as a marker for ideas and images connected with the “first world” – the rose-garden, the children, the laughter,

⁶⁷ T.S. Eliot, ‘Author’s Note’ to 1949 recording of Four Quartets, quoted in Introduction to The Poet’s Voice. Poets reading aloud and commenting upon their works selected and edited by Stratis Haviaras, (Cambridge, MA, 1978), 3.

⁶⁸ See sound recording, Eliot reads. The reading of The Waste Land on this compilation is the 1955 Caedmon recording, but the provenance of that of Four Quartets is uncertain.

the unheard music. Paul Scofield, in his reading for BBC Radio 3, corroborates this but by making a climax slightly earlier, on “Into the rose-garden”, another key image which suggests other, associated ones.⁶⁹ The fact that Scofield decorates his reading with different styles of voice – the very opening exploratory and as if thinking aloud (first ten lines), then a transition (“Footfalls echo...”, “But to what purpose...”), then setting a faster tempo, more personally engaged (“Other echoes.....”) – only heightens Eliot’s spartan delivery and alerts the listener to the slightest stress or change of tone.

Paradoxically, the “musical” aspects of Four Quartets emerge in the passages that are most awkward to read aloud. In ‘Burnt Norton’ the frequent repetitions of the word “world” in the third movement and the repeated “stillness” near the beginning of the fifth can sound clumsy when heard audibly, yet are crucial to the way the poem develops through slight changes to the same material. The word “world” is central to ‘Burnt Norton’. It is used nine times within twelve lines in the third movement, and again as “whirled” in a preceding section. It forms part of the motif phrase “At the still point of the turning world” (second and fourth movements), and is implied when “at the still point” is repeated twice soon after the initial use of the whole phrase. The word “still” is similarly repeated and toyed with. Again it forms part of the motif phrase and is yoked with “point” and “light” (second movement), then used in noun form, “lucid stillness” (third movement), again as adjective with “light” and “point” (fourth movement), and then four times in various forms in the final movement:

Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
Not that only, but.....

When reading the poem with the text the reader can “see” the different syntactical functions of the same word (“still” as adjective or time adverbial), and also fully appreciate the play on “world” / “whirled” by hearing it internally. This is the

⁶⁹ Recording made for BBC Radio 3, c.1996, of Paul Scofield reading Four Quartets with music specially composed.

“unheard music” in Eliot’s constructional method – a reading aloud cannot demonstrate and separate the meanings behind the repetitions.

Sometimes Eliot gives clues to this, for example by using *italics*:

There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.
(‘Burnt Norton’ II)

In this extract there is a tension between the existential “there” and the indicative “there”, audibly distinguishable in the third use by the *italics*. However, the second movement of ‘The Dry Salvages’ blurs this distinction and it is up to the speaker to show whether “There is no end, but addition...” and “There is the final addition,.....” are different uses of the same word. Both Eliot and Scofield in their readings show that they are different, in stressing “There is the final addition,...”.

Repetition of words and phrases is especially dense in ‘Burnt Norton’ and ‘East Coker’. The effect of these is often merely to move the poem on, much as a repeated motif or rhythm drives a piece of music towards the next idea. Examples are the repetition of “pool” in ‘Burnt Norton’ (I), five times in seven lines, and the line “If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,” (‘East Coker’(I)). Yet these are not always easy to read aloud or musical to hear. In these instances the reader who “hears” the text benefits most, fastening onto the mental structure of the poems whose repetitions and patterns are heard compulsively in the mind, but are not easily listened to.

Sometimes the repetition is for rhetorical auditory effect. In ‘East Coker’ (I) rhetorical figures are made from short grammatically functional words: “are” yoked to participles (“are extended, / Are removed, destroyed, restored...”), “to” to nouns (“Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires, / Old fires to ashes...”), “for” and “And” in

And a time for living and for generation
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane

And to shake the wainscot.....

In 'Little Gidding' the phrase "If you came this way..." is repeated in the first movement as a prelude to "If I think, again, of this place..." and "If I think of a king at nightfall..." in the third. Such examples enhance the auditory experience and are more akin to rhetorical forms of speech than musical rhetoric.

There are other examples of how an idea or ideas from a motif can connect poems in the cycle in the way a motto theme does in music. We have seen that "In my beginning is my end" and its inversion is a motif of 'East Coker'. The phrase is used twice in the first fourteen lines then as a fragment at the end of the first movement: "In my beginning". Following its inversion at the end of the poem, ideas from it are taken up in the final movement of 'Little Gidding', the words "end" and "beginning" forming the basis of the conclusion to the entire cycle on the subject of time.

The end of 'East Coker' acts as a point of recapitulation and preview. Dominant ideas in 'Burnt Norton' were light, the first world and stillness. In 'East Coker' their correlatives were darkness, the underworld and dancing. These ideas from the first poem are revisited at the end of the second – the "starlight" and "lamplight", "Home is where one starts from. As we grow older..." and "We must be still and still moving", the latter even finding room to play on the word "still". Furthermore, there are links to the next quartet in the line "Here or there does not matter" (see 'The Dry Salvages' II and V) and, more prominently, in the evocation of the sea in the final lines. In this end there is not only a previous beginning, but also a new beginning. This passage is a pivotal point in the whole structure of the cycle.

Later on in the cycle there are further citations of earlier material in new combinations. The "shaft of sunlight" from 'Burnt Norton'(V) and "The wild thyme unseen" from 'East Coker'(III) appear in 'The Dry Salvages'(V), a revisiting of the first world. The lyric in the second movement of 'Little Gidding' is a recapitulation of the elements symbolic of each preceding quartet – air, earth and water. Like the other quartets, 'Little Gidding' has its own motif phrase, here a quotation – "And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well" – and this time unmodified and intact when repeated. The transformations in this poem are of elements of previous poems, justifying Four Quartets as a true cycle. The sunlit moment in the rose-garden has

become a new moment, here, instead of there, where the light is failing on a winter's afternoon in a secluded chapel. In the final paragraph the ideas are drawn together – the gate into the rose-garden, the children in the apple-tree, the stillness, the half-heard voices, the idea of exploration, the river and the sea, the “Quick now, here, now, always”, and the symbol of the rose now at one with the new element of this poem, fire.

All three of the late Bartók quartets exhibit motivic development, most concentrated in the fourth and fifth, centred around a single motto in the sixth. In the absence of any known model for Eliot it is hardly relevant whether one particular quartet should stand comparison with Four Quartets. More importantly, the procedures surrounding the use of motifs which Bartók and, earlier, Beethoven used can be seen in the poetry. Although they are procedures which are not unique to these composers and not unique to music, their essence is hard to find so abundantly outside the later string quartets of each. Furthermore, these techniques as used in Bartók's music were preoccupying critical thought around the time of the composition of Four Quartets in journals that Eliot had an interest in. If, because he had neither the technical facility nor the inclination to slavishly follow existing models, Eliot did not respond purely to the music itself, but also to some of the intellectual comment generated by this music, comparison is no less valid.

Non-Western analogies

According to Keith Alldritt, Four Quartets is concerned with the “failure to understand reality through words”, hence its adoption of, and interest in musical procedures.⁷⁰ It has by now emerged that, considered generally, a critical approach to Eliot and music which looks less at close analogy, and more at how the musical and literary languages of Modernism influenced each other and to what degree they were one language, leads to fewer dead-ends. Once Eliot's work is placed within a wider Modernist inter-disciplinary aesthetic in which poets, novelists, musicians and artists

⁷⁰ Keith Alldritt, Eliot's Four Quartets. Poetry as Chamber Music (London, 1978), 25. Cited as Alldritt hereafter.

are mutually influenced, it may be possible to reveal more clearly the common ground that is occupied by musical and verbal forms. One aspect of this overlap in creative thought is the influence of non-Western forms. Alldritt hints that Eliot was aware of cyclical form in music, whereby a theme is continually developed across movements and undergoes some fundamental change by the end, such as a key shift from minor to major.⁷¹ Yet besides reflecting the inter-relatedness of material within a composition, the term cyclical form may also indicate a moving away from traditional Western European forms. According to this conception, there is a rejection of linear development in which progression towards a goal is the organisational principle. Thus, instead of being an intensification of sonata form it becomes its antithesis. Instead of a linear, directional plan with a clear aim, which is to reconcile opposites presented chronologically and at a clearly identified final point of climax, the idea of returning finally to the opening material suggests non-goal based structures in which time has a different role.

So-called non-directional music is a notion that the West connects with the East, or at least with non-Western forms. Although this subject area does not form an analogy with a particular piece of music or with an individual composer, I have decided to include it in this chapter because there is an analogy with a way of writing music and an attitude to form which later influenced Western musicians. As early as the end of the nineteenth century, composers began to show an interest in these ideas. Debussy's knowledge of elements of Eastern culture was relatively wide, and Japanese prints, Chinoiserie, and Balinese gamelan music form a part of this. His writings reveal an admiring appreciation of the depth of Javanese music, which he considered to be infinitely more complex than Western counterpoint. Indeed, he castigates European conservatoires for the cost in imagination which the sophistication of recent Western music has incurred. Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, referred to in Chapter One, is an early example of a composer avoiding goal-directed structures with conclusions that suggest inevitability. The whole emerges more as a series of improvisations on a theme, than a continuous development of it. Fluctuations in tempo, pauses and rhythmic inconsistencies contribute to the effect of a directionless wash of sound, at the end of which arrival in the home key is merely incidental, even

⁷¹ Alldritt, 31.

surprising given the nature of the earlier harmonic adventures. Some years later, Bartók was another composer who looked towards the East for material. In his case, the primary influence was not a formal one, but that of folk-song (evident in the duos for violins), notably Arab folk music from North Africa. However, formal influences may be detected in the frequency of arch-forms in Bartók's music, structures that allow for cross-referencing of material and avoid implying linear points of culmination.

Articles by J.B. Trend and others that Eliot published in The Criterion frequently touch on, and sometimes discuss, these fundamental differences in musical form. In 1925 Oriental rhythms were mentioned in connection with Bartók, whilst the following year saw the article by Stanley Rice on Hindu music ('Atonality' and 'Rice', respectively). In 1932 two separate articles by Trend, 'Questions of Form' and 'Oxford History', question the validity of traditional listening methods for an adequate understanding of some contemporary music. Both articles also discuss sonata form in some detail, thereby offering the less specialist reader a convenient comparison in non-technical language. In 'Oxford History' there are passing references to the differing techniques in Eastern and Western music. Trend proposes that composers of some Modernist music are forcing their listeners to adopt a new approach:

In listening to the music of to-day – especially to the music of Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Hauer and others of the most advanced group – we have to fix our attention not on a melody but on a 'melody-type', a family of notes in a particular order, something that we remember not as a tune but as a 'mental effect'. We are beginning, in fact, to listen to music in a way which, for over a thousand years, has been Oriental rather than European.

('Oxford History', 704)

This passage is also quoted by Alldritt but he does not touch on the possible links with non-Western music. In the earlier 'Questions of Form' Trend considers the question of form and music more generally. There is in this piece the implication that, for all

the differences in structure between Eastern and Western music, a “point of intersection” exists. However, it is the language of the article which resonates when we think of Four Quartets:

What distinguishes noise from music is the shape, the pattern,
plan, design, form...

Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness...⁷²

As editor of The Criterion Eliot can be assumed to have gained some insight into these ideas, or valued them as relevant. The strict linearity of the traditional Western approach to musical form, contrasting with the Western view of Eastern methods as circular, may be compared with the methodology of Four Quartets – the notion of several viewpoints, starting from the centre as well as from the periphery.

Such ideas are present in other poetry by Eliot besides Four Quartets, and reflect a life-long interest. In the early 1930's, between the time of his public adoption of the Anglican faith and the composition of 'Burnt Norton', Eliot wrote, "I am not a Buddhist, but some of the early Buddhist scriptures affect me as parts of the Old Testament do" (The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, (London, 1933), 91). Thus, a university enthusiasm was still a significant part of his beliefs. At the end of his time at Harvard, Eliot studied Sanskrit, Pali, and later Indian philosophy, which included interpreting texts such as the Pancha-Tantra, the Buddhist birth-tales known as Jatakas, and the sacred Hindu epic, the Bhagavad-Gita, in the original language. As is pointed out by Ackroyd, this was not an unusual route for American intellectuals to take at this time.(Ackroyd, 47) But, far from being a temporary fad, this interest is likely to have been part of a wider concern with the impersonal outlook on existence, which Eliot later doggedly applied to his poetry. In the essay on Dante, he wrote that he considered the Bhagavad-Gita to be "the next greatest philosophical poem to the *Divine Comedy* within my experience".⁷³ The later After Strange Gods mentions

⁷² Compare 'Questions of Form', 282 with 'Burnt Norton' (V).

⁷³ T.S. Eliot, Selected Prose ed. Frank Kermode (London, 1975), 222.

Western thought as being an “obstacle” to understanding Indic philosophy, whilst according to Stephen Spender, he was on the verge of becoming a Buddhist while writing The Waste Land.⁷⁴

Reflecting this background, there is an abundance of reference to these sources over a range of Eliot’s work. Images denoting circularity and stasis represent both the Buddhist and Hindu traditions, and recur with notable frequency. “At the still point of the turning world” – a line that also appears in ‘Triumphal March’ from Coriolan - , “In my beginning is my end” / “In my end is my beginning”, “We must be still and still moving” (‘East Coker’), and continual incidence of the image of the wheel, both still and revolving, remind the reader of the general ideas of Eastern philosophy Eliot would have studied at Harvard. The wheel becomes a symbol of imprisonment in The Waste Land – Phlebas the Phoenician passes the stages of age and youth in a whirlpool – and in other poems, too – “The worlds revolve” at the end of the fourth ‘Prelude’, the Hollow Men are caught in a circular trap separating idea from reality, and in Ash-Wednesday the stair winds upwards and “Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled / About the centre of the silent Word”(V), in a passage that appears trapped from meaning in a pattern of sonority. In ‘The Dry Salvages’ one of the poem’s voices offers a circular view of history – “...the past has another pattern, and ceases to be a mere sequence - / Or even development”, a non-progressive alternative to linear time which also characterises The Waste Land, and is hinted at in the anachronistic view of Christian history in Journey of the Magi. This latter is a poem written from a more obviously Eastern perspective and, although its formal characteristics remain orthodox, offers through its personae an alternative view of a tradition central to Western values. The third movement of ‘The Dry Salvages’ uses ideas and direct quotation from the Bhagavad-Gita, this section of Hindu thought being framed by strongly Christian content – the Annunciation for the previous movement and a prayer to the Virgin in the succeeding one.

It is not unusual for Eliot to combine ideas from Eastern philosophy with paradoxes rooted in Christian mysticism (see the end of the third movements of both ‘Burnt Norton’ and ‘East Coker’), also a feature of The Waste Land and the plays. In the

⁷⁴ T.S. Eliot, After Strange Gods (London, 1934), 40, and Stephen Spender, ‘Remembering Eliot’ in T.S. Eliot. The Man and His Work ed. Allen Tate (Harmondsworth, 1971), 42-68, (44).

latter this becomes especially notable in Murder in the Cathedral (MiC) and The Family Reunion (FR), whose language anticipates and echoes that of Four Quartets.⁷⁵ The imagery of wheels is a recurrent motif in the former play: “For good or ill, let the wheel turn” (MiC, 243), “Only / The fool, fixed in his folly, may think / He can turn the wheel on which he turns” (MiC, 247), “In the small circle of pain within the skull / You still shall tramp and tread one endless round / Of thought...” (MiC, 280); there is also the gentle play with single words, which also occurs in Ash-Wednesday and in ‘Burnt Norton’, “..that the wheel may turn and still / Be forever still” (MiC, 245 and 256).⁷⁶ In The Family Reunion, Agatha and Mary’s ritual walk around the candlelit birthday cake for the dead Amy is preceded by a remark from the Chorus, suggesting the aimlessness and futility of human thought through the circle image, “But the circle of our understanding / Is a very restricted area” (FR, 348). The paradoxes that suggest circular argument and lack of progression, delivered in a tone between that of the lecturer and that of the prophet, are a feature of both plays too, and parallel some of the language of Four Quartets:

They know and do not know, that action is suffering
And suffering is action.

(MiC, 245)

Human kind cannot bear very much reality.

(MiC, 271)

The man who returns will have to meet
The boy who left.

(FR, 288)

Pain is the opposite of joy

⁷⁵ References to both these plays are from T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays (London, 1969).

⁷⁶ This kind of play on words becomes a self-conscious attempt at humour in The Family Reunion, as in this exchange between Harry and Mary in Part 1, scene 2 (FR, 306):

HARRY- You have hardly changed at all-
 And I haven’t seen you since you
 came down from Oxford.

MARY- Well, I must go and change for dinner.
 We do change – to that extent.

But joy is a kind of pain...

(FR, 310)

For what you call restoration to health

Is only incubation of another malady.

(FR, 314)

There seems to be some correlation between the content of this kind of language, and the way in which it is deployed. Single characters set against a chorus appear as individual voices engaged in a battle for advancement against the collective voice, which eventually becomes a war of attrition as no voice triumphs.

Many of the specifically Buddhist influences advocate the dissolution of identity, or its continual flux. Passages such as “You are not the same people who left that station / Or who will arrive at any terminus” (‘The Dry Salvages’(III)), and the transitory image of the lotos in the rose-garden in ‘Burnt Norton’ evoke the idea of “shunyata”, translated variously as “emptiness”, “vacuity” or “void”, associated with Mahayana Buddhism, and studied by Eliot at Harvard. The whole cycle of poems centres on the apprehension of something illusory, and the vision of the lotos, a central Buddhist image, becomes the symbol of this. In ‘Burnt Norton’ the repetition of “release” (II), and the words “Emptying”, “Cleansing”, “Desiccation”, “Evacuation” and “Inoperancy” (III) all relate to “shunyata” and extinction of identity. This is consistent with Eliot’s notions of the impersonality of art, references to which litter his prose.

Where Eliot combines symbols and fragments of language from East and West in close juxtaposition, the aim seems to be a formal one, of experimenting with compositional form. In other cases, where more time is taken to expatiate on the material, the purpose seems rather to elucidate and assimilate two opposite systems of thought. The Waste Land and Four Quartets represent the poles of this contrast. Whereas in the earlier work Buddha’s Fire Sermon had dovetailed with the words of St Augustine, or a parable from the Upanishads concluded a narrative of Christian suffering and pilgrimage (in ‘What the Thunder Said’) without subsequent development, Four Quartets is more open to the possible parallels between these traditions. In The Waste Land the effect of such juxtapositions is a striking contrast or

the suggestion that a refuge is being sought, not a desire to equate or compare one tradition with another. The wide range of reference and densely allusive nature of the poem permits the inclusion of non-Western material; the succession of personae and identities melting into one another suggest that cycles of rebirth are, and have been, happening continuously. Moreover, the Hindu content of 'What the Thunder Said', from the Vedic Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, hints at a more positive tone than the earlier agony in the garden, of "He who was living is now dead", and the splintering of Western culture into unrelated fragments. An Eastern parable whose meaning concerns teaching, and presumably moral teaching from god to sons, concludes a poem in which rejuvenation can only be found in something beyond the cycles of decline presented. In the poem generally the decline of civilisation in history is a continuous cycle, no worse in one era than in any other. St. Augustine is witness to just as much corruption in Carthage as there is sordidness in the time of Elizabeth and Leicester, or at the moment of the typist's seduction. The ending of the poem, with the deliberately ambiguous "Shantih shantih shantih", points to a new beginning in a historical time prior to that of The Waste Land's previous frame of reference.

Although the use of parable, indicating a more solid framework, and the sudden intervention of Hindu material at the point in the poem when rejuvenation by water is most needed – "Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves / Waited for rain..." – point to a notion of salvation by a non-Western culture, there is no true argument built around Hindu thought in 'What the Thunder Said'. The way is open, however, to the limited consideration of cultural reciprocity which is developed in Four Quartets, a work which looks more discursively at how East may influence West. The critic A.D. Moody has seen Eliot's orientalism as non-Western, a way of rediscovering Christian society through the sheer otherness of a different tradition, and thus the antithesis of Edward Said's view of a Western colonisation, or plundering of the East.⁷⁷ Four Quartets contains philosophical and religious ideas from both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. From the former, Eliot refers to and quotes from the Bhagavad-Gita, most directly in 'The Dry Salvages'. Eliot's title alone embodies a notion of contraries, suggested by the rocks off Cape Ann, which are both guide and agent of destruction, the kind of marshalling of opposites, which is such a feature of the cycle as a whole.

⁷⁷ A.D. Moody, 'T.S. Eliot's "Passage to India"', The Fire and the Rose. New Essays on T.S. Eliot ed. Vinod Sena and Rajiva Verma (Oxford, 1992), 25-43 (26).

This seems to be a central problem for Eliot, the fact that Christian thought is dualistic and based on transcendence. It is the difficulty of dichotomies of thought that tyrannise over human existence which is considered by Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita. This is a discursive poem, like Four Quartets, part of whose task is to reveal the importance of new teachings and disregard the old scriptures as too rigid. The plot centres around the figure of Arjuna, involved in a war between two groups of royal cousins, who, unable to face the thought of fighting his own cousins, is advised by Krishna how a man might find the Absolute at the time of death. Resolution and relief can only come when the mind has accepted the nature of duality –

He who sees
How action may be rest, rest action – he
Is wisest ‘mid his kind; he hath the truth.’⁷⁸

This battle with contraries is a central issue in all the quartets, the extent to which time can be redeemed, the polarities of past and future overcome. ‘Burnt Norton’ grapples directly, and with a sense of impatience, with paradoxes of past and future, arrest and movement, ascent and decline, dance and no dance, in an attempt to apprehend a point of stillness. ‘East Coker’ is dotted with the notion of end and beginning as one, this being used as a motif, with the opposites of health and sickness inverting their conventional meanings. The paradox of “We must be still and still moving” is the kind of statement which might be found anywhere in Four Quartets, yet it looks forward to the notion that human action, when it disregards the consequences of that action, can be effective for the Eastern ascetic’s search for union with the divine, as against the Christian requirement to wait for divine grace without acting. It certainly anticipates ‘The Dry Salvages’, in whose climactic fifth section the themes of time and action coalesce in the idea of Incarnation; the tone is more confident, as if a crisis has been overcome, and reconciliation is nearby:

Here the impossible union
Of spheres of existence is actual,
Here the past and future
Are conquered, and reconciled...

⁷⁸ Bhagavad-Gita translated by Sir Edwin Arnold (New York, 1993). Cited as Bhagavad-Gita hereafter.

And right action is freedom
From past and future also.

This reconciliation comes in 'Little Gidding'. Eliot also uses the Bhagavad-Gita in the third movement of this poem, returning to the theme of liberation from time begun in the second movement of 'Burnt Norton'. The analogy between three aspects of human nature and three types of nettle in the hedgerow is Eliot's, but the separation of these aspects into attachment to the world, detachment from the world, and indifference, is taken from the Bhagavad-Gita. The three qualities are used to solve a kind of problem, not dissimilar to Becket's situation in Murder in the Cathedral. Although Eliot's poem and the Hindu text share the theme of war, it is poetry and the writing of it which most concern Eliot in 'Little Gidding'. A cycle of poems comes to a climax with this poem, is released from being a cycle through the realisation that the artist's or poet's task is to perfect language in the best way he can, "where every word is at home", as a means of perceiving "the still point", arriving where one started and knowing the place for the first time. The final result of the battle with opposites is the peace and humility due to the individual dedicated to his own original work, whatever the result. The setting of 'Little Gidding' reinforces this: the dedication of a small, committed religious community from the past, superimposed on a background of present-day international war. Words from the third chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita seem apposite here:

Finally, this is better, that one do
His own task as he may, even though he fail,
Than take tasks not his own, though they seem good
(Bhagavad-Gita, 20)

Seen from the point of view of different systems of ideas, Four Quartets emerges as a journey towards the acceptance of conflict, between people and ideas and beliefs, not to the final resolution of conflict. It is a journey which has no known goal at its outset and ultimately remains in the same location as it started, but with a different view. Eliot uses both the ideas of Eastern thought for their specific value as ideas,

concerned with circular journeys not linear ones, but also for their value as mere opposites to the Western / Christian ways of thinking he is familiar with. The role of music in the poems is similar. Music and poetry can never be truly brought together without diluting one or the other, yet it is music which enables Eliot to probe the nature of his own language, just as Eastern philosophy enlightens Western values. Through the 1920's and 1930's there was a strain of thought in the late Modernist aesthetic which embraced the alternative creative possibilities observable in Eastern art and philosophy and thus had implications for contemporary structural paradigms. This aspect of Eliot's poetry is not an example of a specifically musical influence, but of an external current of thought that played a part in shaping the creations of writers and musicians in similar conceptual fashions. However, if Eliot did absorb some of the contemporary musical debate about Eastern influences, both of them subjects he had more than a general interest in, this is likely to have had some bearing on the composition of Four Quartets. There were other writers of this period who used non-Western philosophy as a means of questioning local norms, notably Yeats, whose interest in mysticism and its attendant systems produced A Vision (1937), and the poem 'The Statues' (1939), which confronts the idea of art as a marshalling of cultures into a synthesis of East and West, a conflation of Greek and Buddhist cultures. Even so, in discussing the literary manifestations of Eastern thought, I have dealt exclusively with Eliot, and mainly just with Four Quartets, because this is the work to which the combined issues of structural models, the relationship between words and music, and the coexistence of different systems of belief apply most fully.

Joyce and musical analogues

Uncovering examples of musical procedures, vocabulary and metaphors is a relatively straightforward task for the commentator on Ulysses. When one is faced with the task of finding musical analogues for the techniques Joyce uses, comparisons with specific pieces of music or with composers, the evidence is thinner and the critical foundations less secure. Even analogies with specific forms, such as fugue or sonata form are, as has been seen, hard to substantiate beyond the recognition of a general pattern. Yet

the experiments Joyce makes in Ulysses seem to beg comparison with those being made in contemporary modernist music.

Knowledge of Joyce's listening habits and musical tastes is no ally here, rooted as they are in mid- to late nineteenth-century opera and popular song. Allan Hepburn writes:

Joyce's understanding of music, especially when he was writing the stories in the *Dubliners* cycle between 1904 and 1907, is more indebted to the conventions of Dublin's music halls, pantomimes, and repertory of nineteenth-century opera than harmonic experiments happening in France, Austria, and Germany during this period.⁷⁹

Only the few hints about an admiration for Schoenberg and an interest in Otto Luening's methods of fugal composition provide any firm biographical support for direct influence from contemporary composers.⁸⁰ A similar case of a seductive comparison, tantalisingly unsubstantiated by evidence, exists in the possible links between Eliot's Four Quartets and Bartók's string quartets. In the case of Joyce, it is not only from contemporary music that structural analogues may be sought. The more experimental music of a much earlier composer, C.P.E. Bach (1714-88), when compared with episodes from Ulysses, exposes a range of techniques which could be said to be as much verbal as musical. This becomes a clearer and more feasible theory when we look at the prose of Laurence Sterne, a near contemporary of Bach, which introduces a precedent for musical methods of composition in the novel. One way of introducing the subject of musical analogues, especially when they are tentative and lack definite factual evidence, is through composers who have set Joyce's words to music. This will mostly be done in the next chapter. By examining their choice of text and the musical responses to these, largely in the more general way of looking at style and idiom, as well as noting composers' verbal comments on their own work, some

⁷⁹ Allan Hepburn, 'Noise, Music, Voice, *Dubliners*' in Sebastian D.G. Knowles ed. Bronze by Gold. The Music of Joyce (New York and London, 1999), 189-212, (190). This collection of essays cited as Knowles hereafter.

⁸⁰ See Otto Luening, The Odyssey of an American Composer. The Autobiography of Otto Luening (New York, 1980), 194-7.

attempt can be made to discover the nature of the common ground between literary and musical expression. In this chapter I will just consider those composers setting Joyce on whom serialism had an impact.

Ulysses, and later Finnegans Wake, are monumental examples of texts concerned with the inner workings of language. That is to say, one of their major preoccupations is with themselves as texts, their own content and development, and the ways in which internal changes in style can influence them as individual entities. There is also an awareness of how language exists simultaneously as signs and sounds. To what extent is something being silently spoken when it is read? What is the difference between a 'performance' of a text and an internal, aural reading? Such thoughts direct the reader to considering the boundaries of expression: this could be either the limits between one language and another, such as words and music; the limits within one language – the point at which words cease to become intelligible or meaningful; or, more difficult to define, the limits of what is aesthetically valuable or acceptable by a reader. This last point differs from the second in that the patterns or variations made by words individually lacking definite meaning may form structures which are artistically rewarding later on.

Sebastian D.G. Knowles, in his introduction to Bronze by Gold. The Music of Joyce, writes that "...modernism is a *testing of the limits of aesthetic construction*.

According to this perspective, the modernists tried to find the ultimate bounds of certain artistic possibilities....Much of the strangeness, the stridency, the exhilaration of modernist art can be explained by this strong thrust toward the verges of aesthetic experience".⁸¹ If this premise of testing what a language can safely contain is accepted, retrospectively, as a central tenet of Modernism, a difficult enough term to delimit and define in itself, it is equally true of the music of the time. If it is accepted that there are general similarities in artistic aim and, as has been seen, in procedure, in the writing of music and literature, a pool of techniques and ideas common to the composer and writer becomes available. It no longer becomes obvious or necessary to say which art influenced the other. Of course, this way of thinking should not become a licence to claim musical influence indiscriminately behind experimental Modernist

⁸¹ Introduction to Knowles, xix.

texts, or vice versa. It may though, provide a case for influences which can be felt at several levels, but which are, in the absence of written evidence, impossible to authenticate.

As has been touched upon in the first chapter, the arch-experimentalist and re-definer of rules in music at this time was Arnold Schoenberg. Joyce's praise of Schoenberg's greatness, in the conversation referred to by Richard Ellmann with Otto Luening in Zurich, is probably testament to knowledge through Philipp Jarnach and Busoni, rather than any direct contact with his music.⁸² Also, the true serial techniques of what became known as the Second Viennese School were only just being formulated by Schoenberg as *Ulysses* was published in Paris in 1922, so any mutual influence is unlikely. The Schoenberg whom Joyce heard about in Zurich would have been known chiefly for the experiments in free atonality and expressionism – *Erwartung* (1909), *Gurrelieder* (1911), *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), and possibly the chamber and piano works of the late 1910's. Yet when the implications of serial technique for music are considered, they reveal similarities with the mode of thinking behind *Ulysses*. Both 'composers', are interested in the application of systems – styles in Joyce's case – to a discourse. In the case of music, atonality had threatened meaning to such a degree that the twelve-tone method was a way of containing the experimentation before music became so wayward as to deny it any meaning, through lack of any structures for the ear to rely on.

Serialism was intended to change the way music was written in two ways. Firstly, the diatonic system of harmony, in which all notes are not equal and chromaticism needs resolution, is replaced by a "row" of 12 equal tones with no hierarchical arrangement. Secondly, the period of atonality immediately prior to the first serial music dissolved the idea of composing in blocks of pre-arranged material, which could quickly become musical cliché, in favour of fragmentation. It is worth re-quoting Charles Rosen's remarks, referred to in Chapter One, on the constructional methods involved in serial writing, which took their origin from the abandonment of diatonic harmony:

The renunciation of the symmetrical use of blocks

⁸² Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York, 1959), 430. Cited as Ellmann hereafter.

of elements in working out musical proportions placed the weight on the smallest units, single intervals, short motifs. The expressive values of these tiny elements therefore took on an inordinate significance; they replaced syntax.⁸³

Once this had been achieved, new units of meaning could be constructed out of the techniques of serial harmony. This exchange between one system and another was interrupted by a period of intensely fascinating law-breaking.

The kinds of experiments with styles that Joyce makes in Ulysses rather warn against the effects of systemising, than adopt such a technique unquestioningly. 'Wandering Rocks' is an attempt at viewing from all sides, possibly a frustrated fugue, its compartmentalisation suggesting a systemised method of organisation (just as the "headlines" earlier on in 'Aeolus' demanded that a message be read behind them). 'Sirens' and 'Circe' mix a comedy of content with an attitude to form which strains the reader's ability to recognise the sentence as the principle unit of verbal expression. Reading 'Ithaca', there is a consistency of form which has become distorting, and even disturbing. The question and answer method of this episode suggest a "serial literature" gone wrong, an attempt to impose a regularity and equality on different voices, which fails to represent any external reality. There is a sense of being beyond the realm of the human in 'Ithaca', through its obsessive and lengthy cataloguing of detail. This is a feeling intensified by its musings on the outer universe. Peter Egri, writing on the relationships between literature, music and painting, comments:

The chromatic scale – as one of equal (regular) intervals in which adjacent notes are always at the same distance (a semitone) from one another – can express the non-human and – in a given referential context – the inhuman since nothing in human life is absolutely regular.⁸⁴

⁸³ Charles Rosen, Schoenberg (London, 1975), 29.

⁸⁴ Peter Egri, Literature, painting and music, an interdisciplinary approach to comparative literature (Budapest, 1988), 176.

The stylistic intrusions in the second half of Ulysses produce systems and meanings of their own which grow tyrannical. The Hungarian-born composer Mátyás Seiber, writing in the twelve-tone idiom, chose to set a section of 'Ithaca' (including the striking line "The heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit") in a five-movement cantata for tenor solo, chorus and orchestra, on Bloom's meditations on the vastness and minutiae of the universe. His comments on Ulysses are testimony to the innate musicality of the text:

The formal aspect of construction, the verbal virtuosity, the relevance of certain recurring motives which reminded me of musical composition, fascinated me.....⁸⁵

For Seiber, working with serial methods, the frequency of Joyce's verbal motifs would have been highly relevant to a compositional technique based on a system. As will be seen, Seiber also set passages from the earlier A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, involving a speaker, wordless chorus and an instrumental ensemble, suggesting that Joyce's more conventional words should be enunciated to an instrumental accompaniment, rather than sung as music themselves.

Luigi Dallapiccola, another composer absorbed by serial techniques, was also an admirer of Joyce. It was the arrangement of words in Ulysses which he saw as essential to an analogy with music, especially twelve-tone music. About a passage from 'Circe' he wrote:

From this, I believed I understood up to what point in music an identical succession of notes could take on a different meaning by being arranged in a different way.

Interestingly, this leads Dallapiccola to generalise about the methods of organisation in art:

⁸⁵ Mátyás Seiber, 'A Note on "Ulysses"', Music Survey ed. Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller, vol.3 (1951), 263.

My observations on Joyce's prose encouraged me and showed me that, at bottom, the problems of all the arts are a single problem. The assonances I had noticed in Joyce had led me to realise that, in the use of a twelve-tone series, the most careful and conscientious effort must be devoted to its arrangement.⁸⁶

Once again, it is the self-referentiality, the compulsion of the novel to turn in on itself in order to generate its ideas and propel itself forward, which stimulates musicians' interest in Ulysses. Music, like this kind of writing, is directed by the trail it leaves behind it.

There have been other settings of Joyce by composers with serial sympathies. Humphrey Searle (d.1982), a British composer influenced by the Second Viennese School, wrote The Riverrun (1954), a piece for speaker and orchestra using passages from Finnegans Wake. A piece inspired by the same source, Wake by Fred Lerdahl for soprano, harp, string trio and percussion, is an adaptation of the ALP episode as a microcosm of the whole book, and is claimed to be an example of "post-Schoenbergian romanticism".⁸⁷ These composers are apparently responding to Joyce's own self-imposed structures by themselves using a style or technique, which, although experimental, has clear rules and limits. Anthony Burgess, with experience in composing and writing, finds the method of Finnegans Wake similar to serialism in music, in that a scheme of numbers (1132) symbolising resurrection and fall, building and sinning, comes to dominate the whole novel.⁸⁸

John Cage, who studied composition with Schoenberg, became so fascinated with Finnegans Wake that he called it a prison from which he couldn't extricate himself. Joyce's structural principles, such as the arrangement of aesthetic opposites and cyclical form, as well as his handling of the unconscious mind, stimulated political

⁸⁶ Both quotations from Luigi Dallapiccola, 'On the Twelve-Note Road' translated by Deryck Cooke in Music Survey ed. Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller, vol.4, 1 (October 1951), 318-32, (324-5).

⁸⁷ See web page 'Bronze by Gold' on music inspired by James Joyce at http://www.themodernword.com/joyce/music/chamber_music.html

⁸⁸ Anthony Burgess, Thoughts on Music and Literature (II), a Memorial Lecture given at the University of Kent in March 1980, and recorded for BBC Radio 3.

ideas based on what Cage called the “democratising of the mind”. Similar notions of social equality had been read into Schoenberg’s development of the twelve-tone technique. Yet although both Joyce and Cage saw the withdrawal of self as a primary desideratum for a creative work, their methods of composition were essentially different: Joyce’s was through styles and, for all his experimentation, he relied on conventional syntax; Cage worked with chance techniques and wished to free Joyce’s work from what he called the militaristic precision of the sentence.⁸⁹ His *Roaratorio* (1979) is a collage of sounds from *Finnegans Wake*, sounds whose repetition largely constructs the meaning. It is perhaps a necessary irony of cross-disciplinary creative thinking that Cage, a musician (and in Schoenberg’s opinion, more of an inventor than a composer), should have produced pieces which rely on a visual element (such as the acrostic-like word charts that he called ‘mesostics’), whilst so much of Joyce’s writing in *Finnegans Wake* demands to be listened to. Cage was escaping from a more recent past, rejecting what had become Schoenbergian tradition, for the confidence of his own voice as a replacement for, rather than a development of, past ones. This was essentially unlike what Schoenberg, Eliot or Joyce in *Ulysses* had done, as, although their methods were revolutionary, they still maintained a structural base in the past. As Christopher Butler points out in *After the Wake*, the method of *Finnegans Wake* was akin to the appropriation of serial technique by post-modern composers who changed the language of music completely: “Musical expression became rather like that of *Finnegans Wake*; even though the elements (pitch, instrumentation) may have remained conventional for the time being, their organising principles were often idiosyncratic and obscure”.⁹⁰

It is not only musicians who have sought to bring Schoenberg’s and Joyce’s compositional methods together. In ‘“Sirens” after Schoenberg’ (1994) the linguist David Herman discusses the implications of serialism for polyphony and the overlap between linguistic and musical structures in ‘Sirens’. He claims that these are patterns of thought which are twentieth-century universals, systems of language also employed by the mathematician and the philosopher:

⁸⁹ See Scott W. Klein, “The Euphonium Cagehoused in Either Notation: John Cage and *Finnegans Wake*” in Knowles, 151-70.

⁹⁰ Christopher Butler, *After the Wake. An essay on the contemporary avant-garde* (Oxford, 1980), 12.

...both Ulysses and the twelve-tone row figure
as synecdoches for a widespread early twentieth-
century concern with combinatory apparatus as
such....⁹¹

Herman goes on to suggest that, in relying on their own internal syntactical logic, without reference to a semantic exterior, the 'Sirens' episode and Schoenberg's music are part of the early twentieth-century search for a universal grammar.

There is also a claim that the episode is a reflection of Ferruccio Busoni's ideas for the radicalisation of polyphony or fugue, and for the replacement of the traditional system of harmony by the use of whole-tone and other non-traditional scales. The evidence for this is Busoni's short book Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst (1906-7, revised 1910), which Joyce owned as part of his Trieste library. Busoni was certainly a major influence on musical figures whom Joyce associated with in Zurich. Joyce also attended his concerts and the two met, but Joyce is said to have mocked Busoni's music as "Orchesterbetriebe" (orchestral "goings-on").⁹² Nevertheless, as Ellmann points out, the kind of fun-poking at musical instruments done by Bloom in 'Sirens' is consistent with an incident at a concert in Zurich in which Joyce drew attention to the obscene connotations of instruments in a piece by Busoni.⁹³ The composer's small book, first appearing in 1907 and written in a loose form of often isolated paragraphs of discrete observations, contains an abundance of innovative ideas, discussed in the kind of general terms Joyce would have warmed to. This assessment of the aims of "pure" music, its future and endless possibilities, obviously fascinated Joyce in its open-mindedness and unusually broad scope of enquiry. Busoni stresses his preference for absolute music, declaring programme music invalid, but also makes the point that form can be just as tyrannical over true expression as an external programme. Such a paradox is surely to be felt in the 'Sirens' episode. The technical innovations Busoni proposes strain the boundaries of musical language in the way Joyce does with words – the system of major and minor keys is seen as outdated, and a new series of 113 scales which would create "new

⁹¹ David Herman, ' "Sirens" after Schoenberg', James Joyce Quarterly, vol.31 (1994), 473-95, (473). Cited as Herman hereafter.

⁹² See Ellmann, 409.

⁹³ Ellmann, 460.

keys of peculiar character” is envisaged; the tripartite tone (a third of a tone) is advocated, whereby a scale would have 18 third-tones instead of 12 semitones; electronic music further dividing the octave also enters the debate.⁹⁴ Busoni also touches on the nature of notation and how accurate notation cannot guarantee sensitive performance, and may even circumscribe the imagination. A similar point is made by Joyce in ‘Sirens’, and in Ulysses generally, that with the increasing complexity of the printed sign there follows a decay in the immediacy of communication. This is demonstrated most cogently in ‘Sirens’, as an attempt to craft a prose narrative in the language of music suggests the theoretical possibility of its performance, but demonstrates the practical limitations of this.

Busoni’s ideas, then, were likely to have been a direct influence on Ulysses, whereas Schoenberg’s were part of the common climate of thought which Joyce was drawing on. Whether, as Herman urges, the reader of ‘Sirens’ must alter his reading habits in the same way as the listener must on encountering Schoenberg’s music, is questionable. Herman’s analysis is slightly weakened by general statements such as, “Joyce’s narrating disrupts classical narrative form in a manner more or less strictly analogous to the way Schoenberg’s twelve-tone technique wreaks change on classical conceptions of music”.⁹⁵ Definitions of “classical” are clearly open to interpretation here.

If there is a case for commonality of thought processes in Joyce and Schoenberg, it is the result of an interest in abstracting creative composition to the point where it becomes almost scientific. It may be remembered that Joyce also took an interest in Einstein and the theory of general relativity (particularly relevant to both Ulysses and Finnegans Wake in its use of the subjective to redefine time), yet only used the knowledge, mostly in Finnegans Wake, to the extent that it was valuable to his own structure.⁹⁶ However, as the name of Schoenberg was mentioned by Joyce himself, has been used by commentators on his writing, and was a major influence on composers who have found Joyce’s writing sympathetic to serial procedures, there

⁹⁴ See Ferruccio Busoni, Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music translated from the German by Dr. Th. Baker, included in Three Classics in the Aesthetic of Music (New York, 1962), 92.

⁹⁵ Herman, 484.

⁹⁶ See Andrzej Duszerko, ‘The Relativity Theory in “Finnegans Wake”’, James Joyce Quarterly, vol.32 (1994), 61-71.

seems no reason why the absence of any, more factual, evidence should preclude the existence of a common aesthetic between them.

Ives and Wagner

In speculating on contemporary musical analogues for Joyce's structural techniques, the name of Schoenberg has been prominent. It has also been seen that Busoni may be admitted as part of the current debate, and that Joyce paid especial attention to the natural integration of individual words with music. Single musical works do not stand out for comparison with Joyce's writing in the way some pieces of music do in connection with Eliot's work (those of Beethoven and Bartók). This is perhaps because of the complexity of Joyce's invention, which lends itself to analogy with *aspects* of musical works. However, one specific parallel which has been periodically raised is with Charles Ives' Symphony no. 4 (completed 1916). Its abundance of quotations from other pieces, juxtaposition of different styles and seeming attempt to represent reality in the crush of natural detail contained within it make this a seductive candidate for some critics to compare with Ulysses. Ives (1874-1954) wrote orchestral music which was often sufficiently complex both rhythmically and contrapuntally for him to be credited with the development of a new musical language. His inclusiveness singles him out for comparison with Joyce, for as well as quoting popular and patriotic songs, hymn tunes and Gospel-song melodies in his music, Ives frequently reproduces the ordinary sounds of the street, or sounds such as off-key singing to reflect the chaos of daily life. The Fourth Symphony, scored for a huge orchestra with extensive percussion and choral forces, is a mass of quotation and, like Ulysses and the novel, was unequalled in complexity for a symphony of its time. Simultaneity is a governing idea in this work. Ives' father, a band-leader, once conducted an experiment in sound whereby two bands marched towards each other playing different music in different keys, anticipating later experiments in stereophonics and electronic music. In the Fourth Symphony several keys are used simultaneously, as well as different ensembles (up to four at one time), rhythms, tempi, dynamic levels and melody lines. Many of the quotations undergo sophisticated transformations, which enter the piece as short motifs or disguised fragments, as if the sub-conscious is

reordering the material. This anticipates the manner in which Joyce recalls and reorders material in the 'Circe' episode to give the impression of a dream-like succession of random, yet related fragments. Once again, an attempt to stretch the limits of one language reveals the common properties to another through similarities in the methods used to achieve this.

One musical figure whose influence few Modernist artists were able to evade was that of Wagner. Both The Waste Land and Ulysses contain references to operas by Wagner, but these contribute more to the thematic development of the texts rather than to their structural form. Joyce made studies of Wagner opera scores – Götterdämmerung and The Flying Dutchman were both part of his Trieste Library – but admired them primarily for their drama and use of myth, not exclusively for their music. Parallels have been found between Wagner and earlier Joyce – references to Tristan und Isolde in 'A Painful Case' in Dubliners, the presence of Wagnerian myth in Portrait – and the technique of leitmotif in Joyce's writing, and in writing generally, is sometimes argued as an evolution of Wagnerian form.⁹⁷ Yet Joyce's use of leitmotifs in Ulysses – words, phrases, characters or ideas that are developed through repetition, reformulation, augmentation and juxtaposition – is complex enough to be its own language and shows no obvious debt to Wagner's musical architecture. The strongest Wagnerian allusions, such as the opening of 'Sirens', in which the barmaids parallel the Rhine Maidens from Das Rheingold, or the section in the 'Circe' episode in which Stephen uses his ashplant to break a light shouting "Nothung!" in an allusion to Siegfried's sword, function as devices to deepen awareness of characters and the situations they are in. Here the intention is to mock Bloom and the misfortune of his wife's infidelity through sonic associations of his name with the watery scene at the bottom of the Rhine and thus with Alberich, subject of female wiles in the opera, or to comically foreground the precocity of the young Stephen by comparing his drunken and cowardly revelry with a mythical hero.

In The Waste Land there is a similar question of whether Wagner's actual music is being used. The principal references to Wagner are the two quotations from Tristan und Isolde in the first section of the poem, and the fragments of the Rhine Maidens

⁹⁷ See John Louis DiGaetani, Richard Wagner and the Modern British Novel (Rutherford, 1978) for a synopsis of Wagnerian parallels in Joyce.

refrain in Götterdämmerung in the third. There may also be a hidden reference to Parsifal in Eliot's quotation of a line from Verlaine's poem of the same name – "Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!" Anthony Burgess is convinced that Wagner forms a continual sub-text throughout The Waste Land. The typist in the third section is seen as a Rhine Maiden, the ballad on Mrs Porter and her daughter is connected to the washing of Parsifal's feet, the closing "Shantih shantih shantih" refers to the threefold "Amen" at the end of that opera, and, according to Burgess, even the "record on the gramophone" must be Wagner.⁹⁸ There is evidence for Eliot having a strong interest in the Tristan story. One of the poems from an early notebook of Laforgue-influenced works, 'Opera' (dated 1909), is said by Peter Ackroyd to have been written following a performance of Tristan und Isolde in Boston (see Ackroyd, 38), but there is little in the poem to correlate with comments made by Eliot to Stravinsky at their 1956 meeting, referred to in Chapter Four, which recall the deep impact Wagner's opera had on the younger Eliot. More revealingly, the initial publication of The Waste Land in the first volume of The Criterion positioned it immediately after an article on the Tristram and Isolde story in modern poetry. Whether or not this was intentional or accidental, Eliot's use of the Tristan words certainly has significance for the poem as a whole. Both the Tristan and Parsifal stories feature a wounded knight, Tristan and Amfortas, corresponding to the Fisher King figure in The Waste Land awaiting a redeemer.⁹⁹ The difference is that in Eliot's poem the redeemer figure never arrives and in alluding to narratives which are closed and complete he is able to stress the fragmentation and dissolution of his own. Again, this is largely a thematic use of a musical source. The quotation of the Rhine Maidens' song, accurately transcribed by Eliot, is more of a musical use of Wagner in that it appears to exist purely as a sonic fragment. As Philip Waldron points out in the article cited above, this is not a motif of Wagner, only an effect, and one which loses considerably its original impact for appearing on the page. The allusive function of these sounds remains vague as they do not seem to refer to anything specific to the theme of the poem. Inset from the margin of the page, the quotation gradually fades into a fragment, suggesting an accompaniment to the narration of the rest of the poem which gradually fades from audibility, framing the song of the three Thames-

⁹⁸ Anthony Burgess, Thoughts on Music and Literature (I), a Memorial Lecture given at the University of Kent in March 1980, and recorded for BBC Radio 3.

⁹⁹ Philip Waldron, 'The Music of Poetry: Wagner in *The Waste Land*', Journal of Modern Literature, vol.18, 4 (1993), 421-34 is particularly illuminating on this point.

daughters. These sounds are, in fact, a reminder of the dramatic nature of the poem, composed of a diversity of voices, and even argue for a kind of simultaneity of sound on the printed page suggesting that more than one voice should be heard at one time.

Joyce, Sterne and C.P.E. Bach

I will now turn to the possibility of analogies between Joyce and the music of the more distant past. Later in his introduction to Bronze by Gold, Knowles extends the parameters of influence:

If modernism can be said to reach out beyond
the present moment, it is also true that modernism
can be said to extend backward almost indefinitely.¹⁰⁰

Knowles has his mind on Wagner. Yet there are precursors of Modernism's self-generating modes of expression in late eighteenth-century literature and music. A convincing pair of near contemporaries who complement each other's ways of working are Laurence Sterne (d. 1768) and C.P.E. Bach (d.1788). Firstly, it must be stated that in Sterne's Tristram Shandy there is an interesting precedent for Joyce's tendencies to verbalise music. The eccentricities and experiments in this novel, which have come to be termed "Shandyesque", are well-known to those who talk of Sterne as a proto-Modernist, indifferent to literary rules or established formulae. Violating the expectations of the mid-eighteenth-century novel are blank pages ("mourning" the death of Yorick), a marbled page, blank spaces, asterisks, a wavy line representing the flourish of a walking stick, charts of squiggly lines indicating the progress of the novel and a profusion of unfinished sentences and chapters. Ordinary language based on the formulated sentence is not adequate to describe these things. Alongside these extra-verbal intrusions is the generally disjointed style of the novel, which A. Alvarez

¹⁰⁰ Knowles, xxi

has called, "...a style of pure talk, of controlled inconsequentiality, irrelevance and continual interruption".¹⁰¹

Digressions take precedence over the main content or plot, which is subordinate to an inner-world, heightening the role of the narrator and the work's self-consciousness as a literary creation. Such narrative methods have, in more recent times and with the enlightenment of Modernism, come to be termed musical. W. Freedman, in Laurence Sterne and the Origins of the Musical Novel, claims that Tristram Shandy is the first example of such a novel. Before the German romantic poets theorised about the role of music in their works, Sterne's novel is said to validate the growing mid-eighteenth-century belief that similar effects could be gained from different art forms. With the information that Sterne was a proficient viola da gamba player and a regular concertgoer with many musical friends, Freedman argues that the arrangement of musical material in Tristram Shandy forms patterns and designs which are inherently musical – repetitions, recapitulations, themes with variations and contrapuntal interplay are mentioned. Freedman states that, generally,

....some of the novel's most prominent and mystifying effects, like its puzzling principles of order, disorder, and design, are those traditionally associated more with musical than with literary composition and that they derive, in part, from the same source.¹⁰²

The form of the novel is, essentially, its content or subject matter. It is a work which is about its own construction and this abstract quality of the novel as a totality lends it musical properties. This is further substantiated by Freedman's commentary that eighteenth-century theories of music held that, although music could move the emotions readily, and before words could, it was predominantly an abstract and autonomous art, which did not seek to imitate nature.

¹⁰¹ See A. Alvarez's introduction in Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy (Harmondsworth, 1967), 7-8.

¹⁰² William Freedman, Laurence Sterne and the Origins of the Musical Novel (Athens GA, 1978), 17. Cited as Freedman hereafter.

Freedman is convincing in the overview he has of the novel's rhetorical and structural effects. Tristram Shandy is seen as a closed system of points of tension and release, of expectations frustrated and built-up again. Meaning in music derives from "the arousal of internal expectation.....and emotion is the product not primarily of what is provided (in literature the thing described) but of the blocking of that expectation".¹⁰³ The novel relies on its own original materials in order to progress. Similarly, Ulysses has also been regarded as a work engaged in a game with itself, in that expectation and resolution are controlling features. In 'Sirens' this is specifically a game with sounds, which Susan Mooney has called a "waiting game":

The waiting game – the deferred action – is incorporated into the acoustic language of the episode: narration that revolves and returns to earlier motifs, phrases, key words.¹⁰⁴

She cites particularly the instances of noises occurring before their sources are revealed, such as the tapping sound of the blind stripling's stick. Again, effects are produced from a manipulation or arrangement of the words themselves and not from anything exterior to them.

Another musical feature of Tristram Shandy, Freedman claims, are its many attempts to represent simultaneity. Sterne's handling of time adumbrates Joyce's in Ulysses firstly in the many instances of the writing or reading of experiences lasting longer than the experiences themselves. Secondly, in a prototype of the procedures used in 'Sirens', Sterne attempts a four-voice section of counterpoint. Freedman cites the reading of Yorick's sermon in volume 2, chapter 17, in which there is parenthesised commentary from the other three voices, as an example.¹⁰⁵ It is suggested that Sterne's experience of playing music containing fugal or chordal writing for viola da gamba may have prompted this. Whether this was intended as counterpoint or not, it is conceded that, like Joyce, Sterne was unable to force polyphony on to the printed page and had to be content with rapid alternation of different voices or situations, or with two stories being told at once – a digression following a story begun. On the

¹⁰³ Freedman, 37.

¹⁰⁴ Susan Mooney, 'Bronze by Gold by Bloom: Echo, the Invocatory Drive, and the 'Aurteur' in "Sirens"' in Knowles, 229-44.

¹⁰⁵ Freedman, 62.

theoretical question of the contrapuntal possibilities of words, Andreas Fisher has linked Joyce's attempts to simulate fugue – what he calls a “cutting and splicing” technique – with Gotthold Lessing's discussion of the aesthetics of language and music in his Laokoon (1766). Lessing is also mentioned in Knowles' introduction as one who divided the arts into temporal and spatial phenomena, music and literature belonging to the former group.¹⁰⁶ Fischer ultimately sees music, in its ability to exist both sequentially and co-sequentially, as a combination of Lessing's *nacheinander* (one thing after another) and *nebeneinander* (several things at the same time), and thereby argues that Joyce is attempting something that language, by its very nature, is not equipped to perform. It is surprising that Lessing is not mentioned in Freedman's book on Sterne, for his contemporary aesthetic theories are exactly what Sterne, and later Joyce, were attempting to transgress. Furthermore, Lessing had an interest in translating Sterne.

With these observations, Freedman's case for Tristram Shandy as a musical novel is sound.¹⁰⁷ When the possibility of contemporary musical analogues to Tristram Shandy arises, the musical forms Freedman mentions include ‘prelude’, ‘capriccio’, and ‘fantasy’. This suggests a mixture of discipline (such as a *cantus firmus* bass line) with free embellishment. There is an implied analogy with sonata form, yet it is doubtful that Sterne would have encountered any pieces in fully worked-out sonata form, especially during the writing of Tristram Shandy. The specific composers mentioned as working within a comparable aesthetic are D. Scarlatti and C.P.E. Bach. The latter is valued particularly at the level of non-verbal representation, and in the kind of development by association, felt to be a naturally musical procedure:

An important aspect of the associationism in *Tristram Shandy* is the emotive impulse behind a good deal of the associative movement of the novel. In this revolutionary approach to development and structure, Sterne is working in the rococo tradition of his contemporary CPE Bach.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ See Andreas Fischer, ‘Strange Words, Strange Music: The Verbal Music of “Sirens”’ in Knowles, 245-62.

¹⁰⁷ See Freedman, 72.

¹⁰⁸ Freedman, 105.

It is this combination of associative inconsequentiality, by which one idea suggests another as it enters the mind, and its especially subjective mode of expression, which seem best to describe C.P.E. Bach's music.

Bach was one of the few surviving children of J.S. Bach's first marriage. Born in Weimar, and having studied in Leipzig, he held for many years a position at the court in Potsdam of Frederick the Great of Prussia. His works from this period are comparatively conservative in style, probably in line with the demands of his patron. C.P.E. Bach's most interesting works date from his employment in Hamburg, a city particularly receptive to Sterne's experimental prose. This period began in 1768, the year of Sterne's A Sentimental Journey, and Bach's compositions testify to the vibrant intellectual atmosphere of a city in which prominent artists, writers, philosophers and scholars exchanged ideas. Before the Hamburg works, his concertos began to exhibit the quirks of personal expression, which later became such a distinguishing feature of his style. Especially characteristic among these concertos is the carefully written out ornamentation at trills or cadences, which anticipates the composer's later tendency to decorate or interrupt a melody line with capricious and unconventional embellishment. The more radical Hamburg pieces contain in abundance the idiosyncratic traits Bach has become best known for. The peculiar (for the time) sense of instability and surprise generated by eccentric changes of rhythm, pauses, irregular phrase-lengths, sudden gestures and dynamic contrasts hints that a musical language is being used to discover something beyond its own limitations and distinguishes Bach from other composers of the time who wrote in the 'Sturm und Drang' idiom merely for increased expression.

Furthermore, the close affinity that music of the so-called "empfindsamer Stil" ("sentimental style") had with speech and rhetoric, an aspect that Bach sought to emphasise and extend, is most in evidence in these later works. The music is, at times, like speech, mimicking sudden changes in intonation, interjections by other speakers or unfinished sentences. But at its height of expressiveness, the music suggests the far more unpredictable patterns of thought. The unexpected changes of tempo or abrupt modulations represent mood swings or random thoughts entering the mind. Another characteristic is Bach's avoidance of symmetry. A phrase or gesture, which in works by other composers, previous or contemporary, would have been balanced by its

repetition, is often merely left in without being followed up. Such a tendency is in exact contradiction to the ideals of balance demanded by the developing classical aesthetic. It again reminds the listener of a stream of consciousness technique of writing, in which random thoughts are admitted into the narrative, giving the impression of waywardness.

What C.P.E. Bach shared with Joyce, besides a sense of humour, was a desire to make the language he was using more physical. Both were, in one sense, employing opposite means to do so: Joyce used invented words and spellings to evoke sounds from the real world, sounds which gain in effect by being heard and not read; whereas Bach's techniques, by making the listener more than usually aware of the rhetorical properties of music, almost evoke the orthography of the printed page. The music of words is being demonstrated in a reverse translation. Bach makes us "hear" punctuation – question marks, commas, dashes (interjections), exclamation marks, as well as missing full-stops to suggest an unfinished sentence or a rambling line of melody or figuration. Yet the effect of this is not to intellectualise the music, but to render it more physical and immediate. We must hear the music, but thought of in these terms, it has more immediate relevance. Joyce's "translations" of music (referred to in the previous chapter, see pages 95-6), which he undertook in order to find verbal equivalents for notes and phrases of music, are worth recalling at this point. From Bach's Hamburg period, I will select for brief discussion three pieces, examples from three separate genres, in an attempt to demonstrate possible parallels with a stream of consciousness technique such as Joyce's. Recorded examples accompany the remarks on these pieces in order to illustrate more directly the points made.

The first example is Bach's concerto for harpsichord in D, Wq. 43, no.2 (1772). This piece is part of a group of six concertos dating from the Hamburg years, which are more experimental than Bach's earlier examples in the genre. One of them, no.4 in C minor, is formally unusual in having four movements, including a minuet, and in recapitulating the initial section at the end of the piece. The concerto in D begins conventionally for the strings but a sudden breakdown in the accompaniment announces the entry of the solo instrument, which is in a different tempo and comprises radically contrasting thematic material, as if a completely new thought had

suddenly entered the mind (musical example 5; 0'59"). Despite this reversal, fragments of the main theme are still to be heard in the strings, but this time functioning only as decoration, a nagging half-thought gently prodding the main feeling. The second extract from this piece (musical example 6) illustrates the collapse of the first movement, harmonically, melodically and rhythmically, in a jagged manoeuvre to a distant chord, resembling rapid speech abruptly coming to a halt, or as if the mind's mood had suddenly darkened at some shocking realisation. The second movement then proceeds in a gentler and more introspective manner.

Of the ten symphonies Bach wrote in Hamburg, the six for strings commissioned by Baron Gottfried van Swieten and catalogued as Wq. 182, contain some of the composer's boldest experiments. The poet Klopstock was among a circle of Bach's friends to hear the pieces prior to publication. This set is worth hearing in full as the effects are truly unusual throughout, but I shall focus just on the first, in G major. As in much of his work from this period, Bach avoids long, singing melody lines in favour of figuration, thus creating a series of effects rather than developing a single tune. The first symphony's first movement is densely packed with effects, its main theme more of an outburst than a theme. It is preferable for the listener to hear its three-and-a-half minutes complete (musical example 7) so as to absorb the music's variety of invention. Worthy of note are surprise chords (0'18"; 0'22"; 0'27"; 1'18"; 1'40"), unusual isolated notes (0'40"), dramatic pauses (0'28"; 1'00"; 2'17"), sudden exclamations of temper (0'18"; 0'42"; 1'18"; 2'05"; 3'29"), mood swings (2'17"; 2'33"), fragmented rhythmic figures (1'47"; 2'27"; 3'16"), and an abrupt breaking-off in mid-sentence at its close (3'35"). More is to be heard in the second movement (musical example 8), as the regular plodding rhythmic bass functioning as a constant pulse, is threatened by a sudden cluster of loud notes splicing through the texture (0'18"), its regularity later interrupted altogether by an utterly gratuitous pause (2'10"), which can only suggest a distraction to a vulnerable train of thought. This kind of concentration of devices produces an eccentricity that is rare and daring for music of this time, even allowing for the influence of the 'Sturm und Drang' aesthetic, calling to mind the Modernist consciousness in stepping on the borders that musical territory shares with other artistic domains.

The final example is Bach's Freye Fantasie in F# minor for keyboard solo, one of his last works (musical example 9). With its distinct lack of "punctuation" – there are large sections without bar-lines – this piece allows more freedom to the player than any contemporary keyboard work, and the overall effect is of an improvisation. Bach's own inscription suggests he valued it highly: "Sehr traurig and ganz langsam. C.P.E. Bach's *Empfindungen*" ("Very sadly and slowly. C.P.E. Bach's sentiments"). Although the piece is more than 12 minutes long, it is worth quoting in full so that the listener may appreciate the collage effect that the succession of different themes achieves. Each of these is like a different voice embodying a particular mood and, occurring without any apparent order, they create a whole with as much disunity and capriciousness as a dream. Of especial relevance are the abortive attempts at formal themes, such as a minuet (from 3'45" and 7'28"), the degeneration of ideas into cascades of disorganised notes (at 2'36", 7'50" and 11'49"), sudden wanderings away from an idea (1'26") and equally unexpected cadences (3'15"), isolated arpeggiated flourishes (6'08" and 6'25"), and short meandering fragments with no thematic consequence (10'14" and 11'36"). It would be tempting to see this late work of C.P.E. Bach as a summation of his efforts to bring to the foreground the close relationships between music, speech, thought and words.

If the theory is ventured that there is some definable influence by the literature of the period on the music, for Bach's most interesting music post-dates Tristram Shandy by some years, Gotthold Lessing is a useful starting point. Searching for a German title when preparing a translation for the title of A Sentimental Journey, Lessing coined the term "empfindsamer Stil" ("sentimental style"), a description that probably came into common use long after the theories it referred to had been fashionable. The style is characterised by the emotion of the moment, digression, instability of line or narrative, the gratuitously expressionist. Much of Bach's music was written under the twin influences of this 'Empfindsamkeit' aesthetic and that of the 'Sturm und Drang'. However, if we discount the possibility that there is a knowable connection between Bach's music and Sterne's prose, the two still remain comparable as antecedents of an early twentieth-century aesthetic of dislocation. Their experimental compositions suggest that there is a model of intellectual thought, which arises from a general artistic sensibility of the time. Tristram Shandy, like Ulysses, contains many examples of trains of thought which wander, only to become developed as chief resources of the

novel, examples of a recognition that the narrator's language is insufficient for his needs, and of an awareness of the subjective component in the flow of time. With both Joyce and Sterne there is a move towards pure form, which tests the strength of the fences that contain meaning. Even without the more obviously musical content in, and biographical background to, Ulysses and Tristram Shandy, this could be said to be musical, as music is pure form from the beginning. Interestingly, with Bach's music the accepted conventions of working with an abstract form are subverted in order to test the communicative potential of music as a language. By not using regular phrase-lengths, symmetrical repetition, pauses in the expected places, etc. the music is stepping outside a conventional encoding into rhetorical gestures, which, on the surface, seem merely eccentric, yet at an analytical level demand a comparison with language.

§

In this diverse chapter on the links between Eliot and Joyce and particular pieces and composers, it has been seen how widely the parameters of influence may be stretched. Eliot has been discussed alongside Beethoven and Bartók, and parallels have been attempted with several specific pieces of music. Joyce's work has been viewed in the context of two separate musical aesthetics, one contemporary and the other more than a century distant, and in relation to the two composers who best represent their ideas, Schoenberg and C.P.E. Bach. Wagner has been seen as a significant, although more iconic, influence on both writers. The effects of artists' interests in the art and ideas of another culture have been shown to have had an impact on literature and music in similar ways, highlighting the common systems of language that exist between them. It has also been seen how, through their different approaches to writing, it has been easier to connect specific pieces of music with Eliot's poetry than with Joyce's prose. Perhaps because of the sheer novelty of invention of the latter, more general analogies have had to be sought. It might be said that Joyce and Schoenberg shared the self-sufficiency of redefining the terms on which their language could produce meaning. Perhaps it is just this fact that, through radical stylistic experimentation, all of these artists were attempting to invent or manufacture meaning, rather than communicate

meanings from something pre-existent, and this prompted them to solicit alternative methods of working from another discourse.

In all these analogies there has been at least a degree of speculation, and sometimes a great deal more. Yet it is hoped that such an exercise can assist in an appreciation of the connections that music and words share in the widest sense, in order to further knowledge, as much about each of these disciplines individually, as about the links that exist between them. As an antidote to much of the speculation that has been ventured in this chapter, the next will focus on the more concrete matter of musical settings of Eliot and Joyce.

MUSICAL SETTINGS OF ELIOT AND JOYCE

This chapter will consider the various ways in which composers have responded to the works of Eliot and Joyce in their musical settings. Nearly every example is a setting of poetry, excepting the instances of pieces based on short texts from Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. In the case of both writers, the range of styles and techniques employed by composers setting their words is so wide that generalisations which attempt to link the literary method of composition with the musical one being used by the composer can be misleading. Joyce's early cycle of poems, Chamber Music, for example, has occasioned musical responses from Arthur Bliss to Luciano Berio passing, en route, Samuel Barber and Karel Szymanowski.

It would be tedious to catalogue every known setting of words by Eliot and Joyce, or pieces occasioned by their work, for there are, literally, hundreds of such pieces. I will select examples which are firstly, settings of actual words, secondly by composers whose work was or still is broadly influential in many areas of the arts, and thirdly pieces which widen the reader's knowledge or appreciation of the poem or prose passage concerned.

Eliot and Britten

Composers' choices of texts for setting Eliot's poetry to music have been reasonably wide-ranging. If there is a distinct preference for Four Quartets, this is most likely for the combined reasons that the reader is aware of the poems' musical connections even before he has come to read them closely, and that there is a balance of lyrical and prosaic content suitable for a musical response along the lines of recitative and aria, in opera or the cantata. The two most significant composers, in terms of range of output and achievement, to have set Eliot's poetry to music are Britten and Stravinsky. Although the latter's setting of Eliot's actual words runs to less than three minutes,

Stravinsky's standing as a composer of diversity and literary awareness in twentieth-century music strengthens the value of this small contribution.

Britten wrote his five Canticles not as a cycle of liturgical pieces, but as discrete settings of poems unified by their spiritual approach and cantata-like construction. The title derives possibly from the first setting, of Francis Quarles' 'My beloved is mine', from the Song of Solomon. Most of them are memorial pieces to individuals known to the composer. Both Britten and Eliot showed an interest in the art forms of the Elizabethan period and of the succeeding century, and there is a distant parallel between the composer's revival of Purcellian tradition in these pieces as a group, and the writer's interest in Jacobean literature, perhaps reflected in Britten's admiration of the directness of Eliot's language. Indeed, Britten could be seen as the next truly English composer of operas after Purcell. He set the words of many sixteenth and seventeenth-century poets as part of larger choral works with orchestra – Jonson and Herrick in the Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings and Spenser, Peele, Nashe, Herrick and Vaughan in A Spring Symphony – as well as basing a complete work around just one poet, as in The Holy Sonnets of John Donne (1945). The Canticles, composed over a period of nearly thirty years, are an example of Britten's tendency to base a cycle around a subject in which many poets are set. Unlike the canticles in his church operas, these are not liturgical pieces as has been said, but more like short cantatas in which the musical structures are more ambitious than mere strophic settings of text.

Britten set two Eliot poems, Journey of the Magi and 'The Death of St. Narcissus', which he entitled Canticles IV (published London, 1971) and V (published London, 1974) respectively. The first of these is for three voices, counter-tenor, tenor and baritone, and piano accompaniment. The time-gap between this and his last Canticle was over fifteen years so it may be hard to see the group as a cycle, yet as Britten gave the same title to the Eliot settings, he must have intended at least a connection between the mood of the pieces. Britten's twelve-minute setting of Eliot's poem, in which the miraculous birth is apprehended from the point of view of old age, was first performed in the year of its composition, at the Aldeburgh Festival, by the singers for whom it was written. The piece has been seen as a preview of the opera Death in

Venice as its three singers were to become the three principles in the opera (see Humphrey Carpenter, Benjamin Britten. A Biography, London, 1992, 520).

Britten's setting of Journey of the Magi combines a concentration of many ideas with minimum repetition of blocks of text, but frequent repetition of individual words or word clusters. The overall structure is that of a rondo whose ritornello theme is a rhythmic figuration initially announced in the piano part suggesting the irregular tread of a camel, and centred largely on the key of G minor. Later the piano part becomes similarly descriptive as it imitates natural features in the second section – water from a stream, the galloping horse and assorted tavern noises. However, it is the harmonic tension between major and minor harmonies present in this opening section, displayed in the vocal lines at bars 5 and 6, which provides the musical drama throughout the piece.

The root of the harmonic tension is the clash between major third (the triad in bar 5 suggests a major chord) and minor third (those of the next bar suggest B flat minor). This is a dichotomy which centres around the interval of a third, around the idea of triads, and is vocalised by the three voices of the magi. The symbolic importance attached to the number three is something exaggerated by Britten here for Eliot's poem implies just one speaker where Britten's setting has three voices, one for each magus. Furthermore, writing for three voices gives rise to the frequent repetition of single words and phrases – “coming”, “the worst time” (repeated twice), “the ways deep”, “the weather” and “the very dead” (repeated three times) occur in just the first 28 bars. This repetition, suggesting a certain weariness and lack of wonder, even aimless confusion, is almost certainly a deliberate foil to material later introduced by Britten, rather than an unfortunate side-effect of setting three voices to one text. Even when Britten splits up the voices - at “At the end we preferred to travel all night” – as an episode in the rondo structure, there is still repetition and use of triplets to maintain the sense of three voices. At the section “Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley” the text moves more rapidly and rhythmically to indicate the welcome change in landscape, yet at the line “And three trees on the low sky” the three voices significantly come together for a short unison passage. The repetition and triadic movement of the rondo material is never far away. Each time it returns in full (“But

there was no information”, “We returned to our palaces”) it reaffirms the sense of pointlessness and disappointment.

The most startling feature of this piece is Britten’s later introduction of a plainsong melody to the piano part. In the second section of the poem the plainsong antiphon melody *Magi videntes stellam* (that which forms part of the Vespers for the Feast of Epiphany) is announced in the upper voices of the piano part, a possible affirmation of belief in the birth of Christ, which would seem to be in deliberate contrast to the sceptical attitude expressed by the magus in Eliot’s poem. C.F. Pond has criticised Britten for introducing a sense of spiritual certainty absent from the poem, its implied scepticism being its essence.¹ This would certainly accord with sentiments expressed by Eliot on the matter of, among other applications, words set to music in an unpublished letter of 1962:

An artist is providing the illustrations which should be left to the imagination of the reader, the commentator is providing information which stands between the reader and any immediate response of his sensibility, and the music also is a particular interpretation which is interposed between the reader and the author. I want my readers to get their impressions from the words alone and from nothing else.²

Here Eliot is implying that the setting of poetry to music may detract from its necessary ambiguity. It is not just musical setting which can do this, but also illustration and critical commentary. However, it seems surprising that Eliot ranks a critical commentary on the same level as a musical setting, the role of the former being mainly to elucidate and the latter to create new meaning. Although Eliot granted permission for composers to set much of his work, mainly those poems of a particularly lyrical nature, including the Landscape poems, the Choruses from The Rock and ‘Little Gidding’, he did, in the same letter, state that Ash-Wednesday was

¹ See C.F. Pond, ‘Benjamin Britten and T.S. Eliot *Entre Deux Guerres* and After’ in John Xiros Cooper ed. T.S. Eliot’s orchestra: critical essays on poetry and music (New York, 2000), 215-43. Cited as Cooper hereafter.

² Letter to Sir Henry Willink, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, 9/11/1962, quoted in Cooper 226.

“not ...at all suitable for the purpose”.³ This seems to be part of a wider debate on the interpretation of the printed word in general, and could extend to readings of Eliot’s work wherein elements of intonation and word or sentence stress might also remove ambiguities essential to its existence as poetry. Once a poem leaves the printed page and is realised as sound, it can be as much “interpreted” in a reading as in a musical setting of that poem.

Yet in Britten’s setting there is a pointed climax on the word “satisfactory” (repeated eight times), a word significant in tone to the ordinary existence of the three figures surrounding Christ’s birth. More importantly, this is the very moment at which Britten introduces the plainsong melody in the piano part. The three voices sound together on this word, which is then repeated by each voice on a rising curve of notes, as if to suggest questioning, and which includes the note G natural in the vocal line, as if to threaten the E major of the plainsong melody. The word stress is, significantly, on the final three syllables, “..factory”, forming a three-note motif in the rhythm of a triplet. In Eliot’s poem the word “satisfactory” is heard only once, perhaps a deliberate understatement of a word which seems a surprising choice at this stage in the poem, given that it is referring to the birth of Christ, the central subject of the poem.⁴ Instead of removing the feeling of surprise, which might be assumed from the insistent repetitions, Britten not only reinforces the weary reactions of the magi, whose declamations characteristically proceed by repetition, by sounding this word nine times (perhaps necessary to accommodate the plainsong melody), but forces the listener to focus on this word, questioning its meaning through the upward trajectory of the vocal lines. The sense of surprise is apparent in the succeeding plainsong in the piano.

This seems to be a reflection of the scepticism in the poem, which is now pitted against the plainsong melody evoking a solid Christian tradition. There certainly appears to be an opposition between the human – vocal and repetitive, oscillating between major and minor key, one text in many parts – and the divine – instrumental and lyrical, in radiant E major, three aspects of one Word.

³ Cooper 226.

⁴ Eliot’s own reading of *Journey of the Magi*, recorded at Harvard in 1948, maintains for this word the resigned tone of voice employed for the rest of the poem. See sound recording Stratis Haviaras ed., *The Poet’s Voice. Poets reading aloud and commenting upon their works* (Cambridge, MA, 1978).

The four-line section beginning “There was a Birth, certainly” is sung in unison, three people with one voice, as if reinforcing the common origins of the speakers who express their uncertainties about the interpretation of experience. In this final section of the poem Eliot is mixing the “I” and “we” voices for the first time, as if one voice is speaking on behalf of the others, and Britten’s extended unison passage may be a reflection of this, although the first and last instances of this (“... I remember, / And I would do it again” and “I should be glad of another death”) are not set in unison. The unison passage is more likely to indicate the inflexibility of the magi and their unwillingness to be changed by the experience of the birth. The final line returns to the rondo-style of repetition in thirds, also in the home-key of G minor, as if to confirm this, yet there follows a nine-bar piano epilogue quoting the plainsong again and ending in a modified modal version of the E major harmony associated with this melody. Although the religious melody has the last word, it is by no means a triumph over uncertainty, more a fragmentary uncertainty in itself in an ending of deliberate ambiguity.

Perhaps in separating the obviously religious material away from the words of the poem and into the accompaniment, Britten has been able to introduce his own commentary without reinterpreting Eliot’s words. The presence of the plainsong melody in the piano part merely adds another dimension or attitude to those presented from the words of the poem. Additionally, it separates what is understood by the magi from what is understood by the reader. It also perhaps amplifies a distant spiritual reassurance buried in the poem beneath the scepticism of the protagonists. It does not necessarily remove the element of scepticism. The fact that this is a purely musical intrusion, not an interpretation of any actual words, preserves Eliot’s meaning from distortion. Indeed, the poem is different from others Britten set in the Canticles in being less religiously ecstatic, and more ordinary in perspective. What is perhaps missing in Britten’s setting is any indication of the wider debate on the ambiguity of “Birth” and “Death”, a question beyond the limits of a Bible story. In this final section Eliot’s speaker’s language becomes even more direct and divorced from the sense of awed wonder we might expect from a witness to a miraculous event. There are only the line divisions to remind the reader that this is poetry. After the understatement of “satisfactory” there now appears a disquisition on the nature of birth and death, its

past meaning compared with its present one. There is a sense that “our death” refers to the present time, when the poem was written, – the speaker is, after all, reflecting on events that occurred “a long time ago” – and that Eliot is seeking a contemporary podium to retell a familiar story. Despite the unison passages which Britten scores here, suggesting one voice, and hence the possibility of a single speaker confronting the epiphany that birth and death are the same experience, the final four lines in his setting simply return to the resigned mood of three weary travellers, baffled by the purpose of their journey. Arnold Whittall has commented that “...the work proceeds to its ending at a point of clarified ambiguity rather than either resolution or dissolution”, this ending suggesting a contest between hope and despair by yoking the major third of the chant theme with the G minor of the rondo.⁵ Britten’s ambiguity lies between the human and the Divine, whereas Eliot’s lies within the human experience of life and death.

There is another level at which Britten could be said to have addressed the problems of textuality in this poem. In the surface material there is anachronistic content in that the magus is referring to events of Christian history which happened after his own lifetime and is therefore narrating more than he can possibly understand. The many Christian symbols in the poem – three trees, a white horse, vine-leaves and wine-skins – are recognised by the reader, but cannot be appreciated by the narrator. There is already a discontinuity between speech and writing, suggesting the poem is more than a dramatic monologue. Furthermore, as Daniel A. Harris has pointed out, the phrase “but set down / This set down / This.” indicates another level of existence for the text, as there must be another figure besides the magus (narrator) and his scribe (recording the dictation) to overhear these words.⁶ Harris suggests that a multiplicity of versions is available to the reader – Matthew’s, Lancelot Andrewes’, the scribe’s, the “overhearer’s” and Eliot’s. This certainly suggests that meaning is created by interpretation, possibly questioning the authenticity of the Bible, possibly creating, indirectly, a role for the religious in literature. In setting the narration for three voices, the three voices of the magi, Britten’s piece appears to avoid the issue of textual levels of meaning by which a single narration is interpretable in several dimensions, yet at

⁵ Arnold Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett. Studies in themes and techniques* (Cambridge, 1982), 256.

⁶ Daniel A. Harris, ‘Language, History, and Text in Eliot’s “Journey of the Magi”’, *PMLA*, vol.95, 5 (October 1980), 840-56.

the words “set down this” Britten interrupts a unison passage, dividing the voices in a series of striking repetitions, as if to express anxiety over whether what is “said” will be recorded accurately. This is the first point in the poem at which the reader becomes aware of the dictation element, and Britten draws our attention to it. The listener is suddenly reminded that there are three independent voices sounding, a suggestion that there are possibilities for other versions of the story. Besides, the introduction of the plainsong melody is yet another instance of anachronistic content, its significance beyond the experience of the magi, and demonstrates the augmentation of a textual ambiguity by sound alone.

Britten’s other setting of Eliot in the following Canticle is less controversial. ‘The Death of St. Narcissus’ (1974; first performed Jan. 1975) is scored for tenor voice and harp – Britten was himself too ill to play the piano - and was written in memory of William Plomer, a friend who wrote words to other Britten pieces. There is another connection with the opera Death in Venice here in that the character of Tadzio may be linked with the youth and innocence of Saint Narcissus, a combination of the figure from Greek myth and the martyr Saint Sebastian. Both opera and poem are rich in homoerotic elements and concern themselves with physical and spiritual death (Britten was probably aware of his own approaching death at this time). However, the character of Narcissus is himself afflicted by the need to escape from the self through death and, being a combination of youthful and aged elements, becomes a representation of a character, rather than a real one, a feature of the poem which prompts Britten to evoke a variety of moods between the spiritual and the sexual.

The setting is divided into three main sections, with a return of elements of the first two in the final stanza. The first section corresponds to the first stanza of the poem, and the listener associates the musical material with the word “shadow” (this word occurs five times in this section), hence its return in the final two lines. The following two stanzas form Britten’s second section, which itself may be divided into two, the second part, beginning “...but became a dancer before God”, forming the climax of the piece. The piece is economical in avoiding melisma and repetition and again there is pictorialism in the accompaniment, notably in the third section, which comprises three stanzas on the metamorphoses of St. Narcissus. The harp is an apt instrument to suggest the idea of metamorphosis. Here it imitates the “tangling ... roots” (bars 87

and 88), and there is a fluid chromatically descending vocal line on the word “slippery”. Later, in a recapitulation of the climactic part of the second section the trilling harp suggests the “arrows” in the text. A bar’s rest separates the third section from the recapitulatory material, partly as a dramatic pause before the eventual death to come, partly as a symbolic response to the previous (repeated) word “old”, a reminder of Britten’s own state of health. These descriptive features of the music convey in physical sound the sensuality, even sexuality, of the poem.

The tonality is at first uncertain, the vocal line alternating between major and minor keys, and the choice of a harp as an accompanying instrument amplifies the resonance of the harmonic clashes, as the dissonances remain within earshot for longer. Yet the very clear resolution into a C major harmony on the word “God” in the line “... but became a dancer before God” seems, at first, to be a straightforward indication of Britten’s unambiguously spiritual view of this section of the poem. This is clearly the climax of the piece. Some of the material from this climax is used in the “burning arrows” section of the final stanza – loud, high, arpeggiated harp figurations – as a recapitulation of the religious ecstasy, but also as a preparation, through pain, for death. Again Britten may be at pains to reinforce a spiritual aspect to his setting of this poem, its words being about the failure of spiritual effort. It is this sense of religious confidence which is already present in the poems themselves of the other Canticles.

This last poem was, indeed, an unusual choice. Eliot himself refrained from publishing it until 1950, possibly due to the association of the homoerotic with religious suffering and ecstasy. It appears at the end of the volume Inventions of the March Hare, a set of poems much influenced by French Symbolism in technique and subject, notably the theme of the conflict between body and soul. The fact that the poem uses a narrator as the principal voice, and not Narcissus/St. Sebastian, perhaps reinforces the distance Eliot wished to keep between two aspects of his own psyche. The visions in this poem suggest visitation by a nightmarish demon embodying sexual guilt, which occasions a spiritual longing for transformation from Narcissus to Sebastian. Many commentators on this work, notably Ted Hughes and Ronald Schuchard, have seen Eliot himself as the self-tormented protagonist. For Hughes it is an insight into the dualities of Eliot’s later work, anticipating The Waste Land in the

fusion of male and female experience into a single character, in the narration of a ritual of death and rebirth, and in the sections of text that were later used in that poem. He comments that "...the poem records the moment when, looking into the pool beneath his ordinary personality, Eliot's poetic self caught a moment of tranced stillness, and became very precisely aware of its own peculiar nature, inheritance and fate, and found for itself this image".⁷

For Britten the poem is less complex as the ideas are dealt with outside the realm of specific personal meaning, more as opposing principles in a general drama through life to death. It is hard to say whether the climaxes of Britten's setting illustrate a simultaneously religious and sexual ecstasy. That it forms part of a cycle of religious poems called Canticles is most likely because its composer sought a context for a piece which would accept and even welcome the idea of death, as it accorded with his vision at the time of writing. The gap of nearly twenty years which separates the other Canticles from the Eliot settings perhaps accounts for this change in taste.

Eliot and Stravinsky

The critic K. Verheul has remarked that the fourth section of 'Little Gidding' "only lacks the music to be a perfect church hymn".⁸ Stravinsky provided the music in his single setting of Eliot's words, being the only composer of international renown to set Eliot within his lifetime. This is one of the last pieces Stravinsky wrote and bears the title Anthem with the name The dove descending breaks the air, completed in January 1962, and performed at Westminster Abbey by the choir of that church in February 1965 at the memorial service for Eliot. The text is the entire fourth movement from 'Little Gidding', set for four-part unaccompanied chorus. This was a commission for a new English hymnal and the words were suggested by Eliot himself for their religious significance. The sparse response to Eliot's words – the total duration is about two-and-a-half minutes - and the fact that, despite this being a serial piece, the harmonies

⁷ Ted Hughes, A Dancer to God. Tributes to T.S. Eliot (London, 1992), 34.

⁸ K. Verheul, 'Music, Meaning and Poetry in "Four Quartets" by T.S. Eliot, Lingua, vol.16, 3 (July 1966), 279-91, (291).

are not radical or unusually dissonant, mean that Stravinsky's setting does not shed any immediately obvious light on the poetry. Indeed, the requirement for a piece as part of a hymnal probably pointed the composer in the direction of this straightforward and lyrical serial style, even though it is relatively hard for singers to perform. Yet the setting is of a complete movement from Eliot's cycle, so some degree of response to the words as part of a greater whole may be assumed. Stravinsky did dedicate this work to Eliot, even though the choice of text was not that of the composer.

In the structure of the piece there appears to be significance attached to the number four. This is a setting of the fourth movement of the fourth poem of a cycle of four poems, set for four (unaccompanied) voices, and Stravinsky divides the piece into four distinct sections. Each of the two stanzas is in two parts, an A-B-A'-B' structure emerging. The B section of each verse is sung by the whole chorus, the A sections divided between the sopranos and altos, and tenors and basses respectively. It is a serial (12-tone) piece, which makes use of the technique of note rows devised by Schoenberg. Stravinsky uses just four rows as the melodic basis of the piece, repeating them and combining them with different voices. The order of the rows in the setting of the first stanza is largely the same as that in the second, which gives a suggestion of balance and fulfils harmonic expectations.

As will be seen later on in this chapter, another setting of words from Four Quartets, that by the Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina, also attaches importance to the number four. In Eliot's poem principal themes are the four seasons, the four elements (air, earth, water and fire), the implied presence of four distinct voices in the discursive sections, mirroring the four stringed instruments in a quartet.⁹ If Stravinsky had read through the cycle in its entirety, he must have been aware of these aspects. The restriction of the melodic content to repetitions of only four basic rows of notes gives the piece a chant-like quality of sound, reaffirming its religious function. Despite the seamless exchange of voices for the different lines of poetry and the seemingly equal attention given to each word, Stravinsky singles out the word

⁹ As has been seen, Keith Alldritt has gone as far as to name these voices as "lecturer", "prophet", "conversationalist" and "conjurer" – Eliot's Four Quartets. Poetry as Chamber Music (London, 1978), 39-42. Yet without these names Four Quartets may be read or heard as an arrangement of voices, as a string quartet is an arrangement of instruments.

“Name” in the second stanza for a variation. In all other parts of the piece when voices are singing together, each one sings a different, complete note row. On the word “Name” (bar 29) the rows of the tenor and bass lines are exchanged. Although this is not a feature clearly recognisable from listening alone, this technical peculiarity mirrors the meaning in the text of Love, the unfamiliar Name, not quality, hiding behind its actions. Love seems to be a key to this lyric, a religious manifestation of love, as a Name, an answer to the question “Who?” and so the attention given to the word “Name” is a defining characteristic. It is love, the name or the word in the poem, which is more important than love the external emotion. Once again it is the religious aspect of Eliot’s language which has caught the attention of the composer.

Stravinsky’s other response to Eliot was Introitus (1965), composed within a month of Eliot’s death in January 1965. It is another twelve-tone choral setting, here of the words “*Requiem aeternam dona eis*” from the mass or Burial Service, and written in memory of the poet but unrelated directly to his work. The scoring is for male voices, harp, piano, gongs, timpani, solo viola and double bass. It is a serial piece in three verses with frequent appearances of the tritone, yet recurring harmonic motifs give this piece, like Anthem, a more traditional harmonic feel. The mood is slow and dark, an effect achieved by repeated lament-like chanting, which suggests the atmosphere of a funeral procession.

Stravinsky and Eliot did not meet each other until 1956, at the Savoy Hotel in London with Stephen Spender, from which Stravinsky recalls that they talked about Wagner, notably Tristan und Isolde, and dance. There were also further meetings, in London in 1961, and New York in 1963 with their wives and Robert Craft after the fiftieth anniversary performance of The Rite of Spring. Stravinsky wrote to Eliot in the interim concerning the possible publication by Faber of his own dialogues, and suggesting collaborations for the libretto of The Rake’s Progress and a biblical work, later to become The Flood, which Eliot declined.¹⁰ The second London meeting was arranged to discuss the proposed setting of words from ‘Little Gidding’, but this eventually happened in letter form. It is clear that Eliot admired the composer’s work

¹⁰ See Robert Craft, ‘Stravinsky and Eliot. “Renard” and “Old Possum”’, Encounter, vol.50 (January 1978), 46-51 which charts the correspondence and meetings between Eliot and Stravinsky. Cited as Craft hereafter.

and deemed him suitable for setting his own work – “I would be willing to have [words from ‘Little Gidding’] set to music if the composer was Stravinsky” (Craft, 50), whereas Stravinsky had, prior to reading ‘Little Gidding’, regarded Eliot’s work as words for speaking rather than words for singing (Craft, 50). However, from his persistent invitations to Eliot to collaborate on “music-drama” projects, he most probably recognises the music-hall element in Eliot’s verse dialogue.

That there is so little direct setting of Eliot’s words in Stravinsky’s music is frustrating as there are some significant general parallels between their artistic methods and ideals. They both turned to the church in the 1920’s and both found a use for neo-classical idiom in alluding to tradition through an impersonal use of fragments from the culture of the past – Stravinsky in Oedipus Rex (through form and melodic idiom) and Pulcinella (by direct borrowing of tunes from pre-classical composers), and Eliot in The Waste Land (through allusions, references and direct quotations). Jayme Stayer has argued that Oedipus Rex and The Waste Land share a certain use of voices in their compositional style, one which lays out other voices kaleidoscopically without recourse to an authorial one.¹¹

Eliot attended Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes performances in London in May and July 1919, hearing music by Falla and Stravinsky. He particularly admired the choreographer Léonide Massine, of whom he wrote, “I want to meet him more than ever, and he is a genius”.¹² The ‘London Letter’ columns Eliot wrote for The Dial at this time reflect his view of the ballets as a new, physical form of poetic drama. He comments in the August 1921 issue that, “...the ballet will probably be one of the influences forming a new drama, if a new drama ever comes.”¹³ Stravinsky is later praised as the greatest success since Picasso. Following a performance of The Rite of Spring, Eliot responded to the primitive interests of the composer. The writer and musician, Anthony Burgess, even claims Eliot admitted the first lines of The Waste Land to have been directly inspired by the opening bassoon solo in Stravinsky’s

¹¹ See Jayme Stayer, ‘A Tale of Two Artists. Eliot, Stravinsky, and Disciplinary (Im) Politics’ in Cooper, 295-333.

¹² The Letters of T.S. Eliot ed. Valerie Eliot (London, 1988), vol.1, 523.

¹³ T.S. Eliot, ‘London Letter’, The Dial, vol.71, 8 (August 1921), 213-7, (214).

score.¹⁴ Eliot's review of the ballet in The Dial finds the ballet lacking the modernity of the music and points to the emergence of art from the noises of life, a feature of The Waste Land:

Whether Stravinsky's music be permanent or ephemeral
I do not know; but it did seem to transform the rhythm
of the steppes into the scream of the motor horn, the
rattle of machinery, the grind of wheels, the beating
of iron and steel, the roar of the underground railway,
and the barbaric cries of modern life; and to transform
these despairing noises into music.¹⁵

The music clearly represented the modern, the ballet the primitive ceremony. These interesting comments were written just before the publication of The Waste Land, Eliot's own urban nightmare, and there are certain parallels in the genesis of each. Stravinsky was now in Paris, a more urban and international environment in 1913 than the St. Petersburg of previous years. For both Eliot and Stravinsky there was a need to learn a new compositional language – the old forms of Rimsky-Korsakov and Scriabin were just as restrictive to Stravinsky as the Georgian poets or the early modernists had been to Eliot. Indeed, Stravinsky was initially unable to write down much of the music for The Rite of Spring, as its complexity could only be realised internally or on the piano. Both works are a succession of scenes and borrow and quote from folk-song and pagan ritual associated with the return of spring. The fragmentation is such that they rely more heavily than usual on the ability of the author to bring all the fragments together intelligibly. Indeed, Eliot stresses in this review the role of the *music* over the choreography (which he found inadequate) in The Rite of Spring in linking the primitive with the modern, in the way that The Golden Bough perpetuated myth into modern times, and the music's ability to find ritual and violence in the automatic life of the modern city.

The word "rhythm" stands out in the above quotation from The Dial as the unifying element that transforms the cries and noises into music. Rhythm is crucial to both The

¹⁴ Anthony Burgess, Thoughts on Music and Literature (I), a Memorial Lecture given at the University of Kent in March 1980, and recorded for BBC Radio 3.

¹⁵ T.S. Eliot, 'London Letter', The Dial, vol.71, 10 (October 1921), 452-5, (453).

Rite of Spring and The Waste Land. In Stravinsky's music it is the novelty and complexity of the rhythms, incomprehensible to many of its first audience, which knit the short pagan scenes together. Rhythms are unpredictable and asymmetrical, without regularity or conventional repetition, and with little sense of which beat will be accented in a sequence of notes. The number of beats in a bar changes constantly and different rhythms are superimposed. Some sections of the ballet are made from collections of melodies or blocks of sound which have no directional purpose (either harmonically or structurally), and which are repeated purely for that effect, not as contributions to an overall argument. The personality of the piece stems not from the original tunes or their rhythms, but from the ingenious artificer who creates the new rhythms of the ballet sequence. In Eliot's poem rhythm is the means by which a vocalised reading may be fully understood, for the changes in rhythm indicate the changes in voice and enable the reader to hear the architecture of the poem. Furthermore, it is only by hearing the *rhythm* of lines such as 'O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag' or 'Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop' that the printed text can be fully understood. In the third section of the poem the repeated Wagnerian refrain "Weialala leia / Wallala leialala" and the isolated cells of quotation, "la la" and "burning", need to be heard as part of the overall rhythm of the surrounding lines. Their existence seems to be purely sonic, creating meaning through patterns of sound alone. The critic Ronald Schuchard points out that Sweeney Agonistes was to be accompanied by drum taps in order to give it a modern feel, citing Stravinsky as a comparison – "All this [the chorus, characters and drums] was to be orchestrated into a modern rhythm, like Stravinsky's music, making a new symbolic drama, a new dramatic ritual."¹⁶

Eliot's comments are also an interesting premonition of the later urban ballet by George Antheil, Ballet Mécanique, complete with all of the features of city life mentioned by Eliot, which was premiered in 1926 and attended by Eliot and Joyce. Margaret E. Dana's claim that The Waste Land is a suitable text for music is certainly a challenging thought to any prospective composer.¹⁷ Her conclusion is that The Waste Land is Eliot's only Wagnerian work in the sense that it employs a technique

¹⁶ Ronald Schuchard, Eliot's Dark Angel (New York and Oxford, 1999), 114.

¹⁷ Margaret E. Dana, 'Orchestrating The Waste Land. Wagner, Leitmotiv, and the Play of Passion' in Cooper, 267-94.

which comes close to true leitmotif. For Dana it is the literary allusion which equates to the musical leitmotif – “...a highly compressed symbolic statement densely packed with meaning, capable of plunging into the most abysmal depths or of soaring to the highest peaks of transcendence”.¹⁸ Although there may be an equation between literary and musical procedures here, Eliot’s technique remains a literary feature, not one which makes the literature suitable for setting to actual music.

Other settings of *Four Quartets*

However much The Waste Land is deemed a text which demands a musical response, and is itself charged with musical qualities, Four Quartets has occasioned more settings than any other Eliot work. This is perhaps because its lyrical sections are more easily separable from the rest of the poem. Eliot does not use a fragmentary method of writing here, which gives the composer a narrative on which to focus his setting.

The English composer Jonathan Harvey has produced a more thrilling version than Stravinsky’s of the lyric “The dove descending...”, for chorus with organ. The words move slowly but the violent outbursts from the chorus, startling *sforzando* on the words “terror” and “torment”, the sudden contrasts of loud and soft, and the welling climax in the organ towards “Who then devised the torment?” – all splendidly sonic effects for a cathedral acoustic – convey the sense of fiery ecstasy that has been accumulating in this poem. This is a movement from Four Quartets which can stand alone comfortably, more so than the equivalent movements from the earlier poems. This is, no doubt, a reason for Eliot having suggested it for a musical setting to Stravinsky.

‘Little Gidding’ provided words for a cantata by Sir Arthur Bliss, Shield of Faith (1975), some forty minutes of music of which Eliot’s words make up about twelve. The piece was a commission for the five hundredth anniversary of St. George’s

¹⁸ Cooper, 286.

Chapel, Windsor, and uses various texts in its five movements – poetry by Dunbar, Herbert, Pope, Tennyson and Eliot. The texts were selected not by Bliss, but by the Canon of St. George's. It is scored for soprano and baritone soloists, chorus and organ. Excerpts from 'Little Gidding' form the fifth and final movement, again because the words exhibit a strength of faith fitting for a climax, especially as this movement follows a setting of a dark and doubting passage from Tennyson's In Memoriam. The words are from the fifth movement of the poem, from the line "A people without history..." to the end. Choral sections alternate with passages for solo soprano and baritone, together with brief interludes for organ.

In one of these interludes the marking in the score is '**Scherzando (quasi birdsong)**', using the flute and oboe stops of the organ, perhaps to recall the voice of the bird in 'Burnt Norton' of which the lines set here are an echo – "Quick, said the bird, find them, find them" ('Burnt Norton' I) and "Quick now, here, now, always" ('Little Gidding' V). Soprano and alto voices are both divided here and rapidly answer each other in urgent alternation and repetition. However, there are no other obvious suggestions that Bliss here is responding to other sections of Four Quartets or sees it as an organically conceived cycle.

Clearly, Bliss did see Eliot's words as the culmination of a spiritual journey and intended to use them as the climax of his own. If the five-part structure of the cantata is seen as an arch-form, the central apex movement (a setting of parts of Pope's An Essay on Man) is symbolic of doubt and the foolishness of man against the wisdom of God, after which the mood turns more towards faith and a final affirmation in the last movement. Bliss said in a note to the piece that he did not fully understand Eliot's meaning in Four Quartets, yet from his reaction to the texts for the whole cantata (these were not his own choice), it can be assumed that there is a personal significance to such a journey of faith. Like Britten, Bliss stresses the religious intensity behind the words rather than offering any interpretation of the way Eliot uses them. The treatment is often quite literal – the soprano soloist begins with fragments of recitative, as if suspended in time at the words "timeless moments", before the return of more regular rhythms, and there is a loud and predictable climax at "When the tongues of flame are in-folded..." with chromatic harmony giving way to consonance at "...are one". These techniques offer no special insight into Eliot's particular

meaning or patterning of these sections, yet in terms of dynamics, tempo, vocal combinations and mood Bliss builds more variation into this movement than any other in the piece – note the setting of “With the drawing of this love” for double chorus, the only instance of this scoring in the entire work.

As Eliot’s patternings of word, image and symbol in Four Quartets are developed over large areas of each poem, any musical setting which hopes to comment on or add to this approach must therefore set a considerable amount of continuous text. For example, the line “When the tongues of flame are in-folded / Into the crowned knot of fire...”, which Bliss uses at the end of his cantata movement, relates back to a section from the third movement in which the memories of the “three men” – Laud, Strafford and Charles I on the scaffold – and those of their opponents “...are folded in a single party”. A composer who wishes to illustrate or expand upon such a connection is forced into writing a lengthy setting.

The Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina (born 1931) also chose to set words from ‘Little Gidding’ as part of a larger work, the Hommage à T.S. Eliot (1987), in which other sections of Four Quartets are also set. Gubaidulina chooses the lyric fourth movements from ‘Burnt Norton’ and ‘East Coker’ as the texts for two sections of this thirty-five minute piece for soprano and instrumental octet in seven movements. The composer has said that it is the experience of time, rather than the poem’s spiritual content, which gives this piece its essential meaning. Yet even a brief survey of the piece reveals an obvious response to the poem’s Christian heritage.

The whole of the fourth movement of ‘Burnt Norton’ is set as Gubaidulina’s third movement, following two instrumental sections. The setting is for unaccompanied voice, with significant melismas on the words “time” and “silent”. Little is made of the sensuality of sound Eliot has created with the words “turn”, “Stray”, “Clutch”, “cling”, “Chill” and “curled”, or of the variant meanings of the word “still” in the final two lines. The absence of accompaniment here is intended to create a feeling of timelessness, especially around the melismas, and this is highlighted by the final line of the text, “At the still point of the turning world”.

There follows a section for strings alone, in which pizzicato effects suggest a slow dripping of time, after which the whole ensemble come together for the first time in a setting of the last two stanzas from 'East Coker'. After a long melismatic introduction – the first line occupies over four minutes of the movement's seven-and-a-half – the tension builds between voice and accompaniment. Clearly a climax is intended here: the assembly of all forces and the contrast between loud stabbing string chords and the shrill soprano note on "fires" in the first stanza, and the bare sound of unaccompanied voice throughout the second, make this movement the dramatic core of the work. The pizzicato string effects from the previous interlude recur at the close of the first stanza, as if to announce the following line, "The dripping blood our only drink". The effect used to symbolise time is now applied to a religious symbol. While forming part of a poem about time, the text in its imagery and narrative here concerns the acknowledgement of Christ's sacrifice. Interestingly, the imagery is a conflation of Buddhist (fire of purging) and Christian (roses and briars of pain) symbols.

The suspicion that Gubaidulina's interest in the poems lies more in their spiritual content is confirmed in the concluding seventh movement, which follows another instrumental interlude, this time for clarinet and strings. The whole ensemble is once again gathered and more than half of this eight-minute movement is instrumental, the voice only entering with horn and bassoon beyond the half-way point. The quotations from Dame Julian of Norwich in 'Little Gidding' III and V are set to a feverishly ascending vocal line and *tremolando* string accompaniment. There are extremes of high and low pitch and the voice eventually settles on the word "fire" as the final point of climax, sounding more threatening than consolatory. Both the choice of text and its treatment suggest a foregrounding of religious subject matter as the occasion for this music. What begins as a questioning interest in time – the 'Burnt Norton' setting – is taken over by spiritual fervour. Although the piece is a reaction to the sentiments in Eliot's poetry, and to some extent charts a progression from darkness and awareness of death ('Burnt Norton'), through the suffering necessary for redemption and rebirth ('East Coker'), to the fulfilment of religious consummation ('Little Gidding'), Gubaidulina's handling of the texts selected from the three different poems does not reveal connections between them or overtly identify them as part of the same cycle. An essential element of a cycle would seem to be the later revisiting of earlier material or themes from a different or more enlightened perspective,

which Eliot himself does frequently in Four Quartets. The reappearance of the experience in the rose garden, the discussion on history, and the evolving use of symbols such as the wheel, fire and the rose are examples of this. Despite the obvious potential for an extended cantata, other vocal work, or even large-scale orchestral composition following Eliot's symbolic argument and carefully crafted development in the overall structure, composers seem to have preferred to set the short, lyrical sections to music which, with the exception of the Gubaidulina work, is fairly unchallenging as pure music. Whilst an opera of Four Quartets appears an unlikely project – The Waste Land, on the other hand, could certainly be realised as such – there are clearly possibilities for a lengthy choral setting with solo voices and orchestra, and a timescale over which to reflect the poem's construction in musical terms.

Minor poems and *The Rock*

Besides the settings from Four Quartets, there are a number of pieces which have used shorter lyrical poems, many of them composed in Eliot's lifetime.¹⁹ One of the short lyrics under the title 'Minor Poems', 'Eyes that last I saw in tears', has been set by John McCabe (b. 1939). It is part of a continuous setting of five poems entitled Five Elegies for soprano and chamber orchestra (1958). Eliot's lines, lasting under three minutes, sit between a lively interpretation of Herrick and a raging response to Dylan Thomas. McCabe evidently needed a meditative setting here, instanced by gentle flute and clarinet counter-melodies and scalic flourishes. The result is a kind of anthology of British elegiac poetry in sound, for there are no defining hallmarks of Eliot's poetry which McCabe chooses to develop. The poem's origin as an off-cut from the original version of The Waste Land (Eliot was reluctant to drop the short, lyrical passages that Pound suggested for excision), and the suitability of its material for The Hollow Men, are not factors caught by the character of this setting. The piece is predominantly an evocation of mood, not a development of words. The American teacher and prolific composer Vincent Persichetti's The Hollow Men (1948) is another example of this.

¹⁹ An exhaustive checklist detailing settings of Eliot's work may be found in Cooper, 335-40.

No words are set but instead a solo trumpet intones a desolate line over plangent strings with organ-like textures. The title of the poem is itself adequate to understand this piece.²⁰

The letter to Henry Willink, quoted earlier in this chapter, reveals Eliot's wariness of musical settings of his own poetry. A letter to Stravinsky shows some of his reasons for having refused to supply Michael Tippett with a text for his oratorio A Child of our Time and awareness of his own lack of technical competence necessary for such a task. Any rudimentary knowledge of musical theory acquired in childhood has, by 1959, "completely vanished. I am now unable to read a note, and it seems to me that some proficiency in music is the necessary part of the equipment of a librettist".²¹

Earlier, in the 1930's, Eliot's attitude was more confident with regard to musical-textual collaborations. The significant collection of short 'Landscape' poems was published together in 1936, yet the first two, 'New Hampshire' and 'Virginia' appeared separately in The Virginia Quarterly Review, April 1934, with the intriguing title 'Words for Music'. It is not known whether Eliot had a composer in mind for the setting of these poems or whether he intended to find one – this should not be assumed from the subtitle as the word "music" (or "musical") is often used by Eliot non-specifically to indicate a quality in poetry. Even so, there are in the first poem, 'New Hampshire', strong suggestions of the world of 'Burnt Norton' – the subject of children's voices heard in a natural surrounding and the imagery and language similar to the lyrical passages in the second and fourth movements. Such aspects prompt the thought that Eliot may have conceived a more directly musical version of material from 'Burnt Norton' in the hope that it might be taken up by a composer. These 'Landscape' poems have, however, been set by a much more recent composer, Thomas Adès (b. 1971), whose Opus 1, Five Eliot Landscapes (1990), indulges in a romantic conception of Eliot's nature imagery without attempting to create a cycle or

²⁰ Opinion has been divided about this piece. Ronald Toering, in ' "The Hollow Men": a Poetic and Musical Expression', National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors Journal, 24 no.3, Spring 1976, 8-11, writes that the poem and the music are "examples of different art forms successfully communicating the same thought...", and that the piece captures "the 'musical' devices of Eliot's technique which relate directly to the compositional technique of any composer". These devices are not discussed. Paul Snook, on the other hand, in a review of a recording – 'The Hollow Men', Fanfare, vol.1, 4 (March/April 1978), 78 – dismisses the piece as "light-years removed from the bitter ironies and grotesque juxtapositions of the classic T.S. Eliot poem which purportedly inspired it".

²¹ Letter to Stravinsky, 19 March, 1959, Sacher Stiftung, Basel. Quoted in Cooper, 152.

comment on Eliot's poetic construction. Eliot's own rapid reading of the last poem, 'Cape Ann', may have influenced Adès in his setting of these words to very fast staccato notes.²² Adès has also written a large-scale orchestral response to 'Little Gidding', *...but all shall be well* (1993), although this is principally an interpretation of the quotation from Dame Julian of Norwich, hence the subtitle 'consolation for orchestra'.

The period in Eliot's life from 1932 until the publication of 'Little Gidding' is especially rich in associations between poetry and music. The project involving music and staging for Eliot's The Rock also dates from this time. Unlike the material for The Rock, the 'Landscape' poems are not dramatic pieces for the stage, yet Eliot, being already engaged in collaboration with Martin Shaw, may have had plans for a musical setting of them. Martin Shaw, a composer who had revitalised English Church music, set Eliot's words for the pageant entitled The Rock (1934), from which a fragmentary score published by Sadler's Wells survives.²³ The decision to collaborate on the project was probably influenced by Eliot's interest in the music-hall and its necessary balance between poetry and performance. Indeed, the song 'At Trinity Church I Met My Doom' had direct origins in music-hall drama, and it has been claimed by E. Martin Browne that the entire structure of the pageant is based on a revue by C.B. Cochran.²⁴ It was probably with The Rock in mind that Eliot observed in 'The Need for Poetic Drama' of 1936 that "...the actor should be in an intimacy of relation to the audience which had for a long time been the secret of the music-hall comedian".²⁵

The church pageant called The Rock had largely functional beginnings. It was initially a result of an invitation Eliot received to provide a drama for a building project. George Bell, The Bishop of Chichester from 1929, had long wished to re-establish drama as a church practice and in 1930 appointed E. Martin Browne as Director of Religious Drama. Browne was keen to attract literary talent for that

²² T.S. Eliot, *T.S. Eliot reads The Waste Land, Four Quartets and other poems* (London, 1971).

²³ I have received special permission from Sadler's Wells to copy the music for The Rock by Martin Shaw. This is held by the British Library and Sadler's Wells is the copyright holder. When the original printings were exhausted it went out of print. There are thirteen pages of music and a title page. Music is included for some ten separate numbers: 'Nehemiah', 'Rahere', 'Danes', 'Crusaders Scene', 'Modern Scene', 'Iconoclasm Scene', 'Westminster Abbey', '2nd Procession', '3rd Procession', and 'Builders Song'.

²⁴ See interview by Burke Wilkinson in *The New York Times*, February 7, 1954, Section 2, p.1, col.6.

²⁵ T.S. Eliot, 'The Need for Poetic Drama', *The Listener*, vol.16 (1936), 994.

purpose. Following a weekend spent in Chichester with Browne and his wife in December 1930, and further correspondence, Eliot was engaged (perhaps because of his recent conversion) to provide a dramatic history of the church in a contemporary setting. However, because it was decided that the pageant should be presented in a theatre, thereby ruling out processions, a series of historical tableaux, presented out of chronological order, was eventually demanded. These consisted of short scenes dating from Roman times to the present day and included episodes to mark the consecration of Westminster Abbey and the building of Wren's St. Paul's Cathedral. Following the agreement of Lilian Baylis, the theatre at Sadler's Wells, London, was rented for the short two-week run of performances given by the Lloyds Light Orchestra and a small choir, conducted by Dr G. F. Brockless.

The purpose of the pageant was, as claimed in the programme note, "a new form of advertisement" to raise money for the construction of a new church in London.²⁶ On the title page of the programme the credits are "The Rock. A pageant play by T.S. Eliot. Music by Martin Shaw. Devised and produced by E. Martin Browne." Eliot and Browne jointly appended a note to the programme as a synopsis of the action and commented that "The direct action of the play is concerned with the efforts and difficulties of a group of bricklayers engaged in building a modern church" (page 7). The action in the play represents the physical obstacles to construction as well as symbolising struggles of the Church throughout history.

Eliot wrote only one complete scene for the pageant, a satire presenting the conflict between a Fascist/Communist ideology and a character called Plutocrat. He also wrote the words for a music-hall ditty given to the characters of the foreman and his wife, which was set by Shaw as variations on a popular song. Although willing to supply the words, Eliot was at first reluctant to become involved with the production and envisaged difficulties with the amateur actors concerned. Around the time of the first performance (the show had a two-week run, opening on 28th May, 1934) Eliot wrote to Shaw saying how much he liked the music, praising its versatility and adaptability.²⁷ As a collaborator with Shaw, Eliot would have had to discuss certain

²⁶ *The Rock* programme for Sadler's Wells Theatre, London (London, 1934), 5.

²⁷ Quoted in E. Martin Browne, *The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays* (Cambridge, 1969), 13. Cited as Browne hereafter.

technical aspects of setting words to music and there are brief notes written from Shaw to Eliot advising him on the sound of rhyme when sung and on the musical rhythms of certain syllables.²⁸

The climactic song in The Rock, for which Eliot wrote the words and Shaw the music, was entitled “The Builders” and was written for audience participation. This was also published later as a separate song sheet. It forms the climax of a series of scenes about builders of past churches and the problems they faced, though its musical merits are slight. The first verse of the song – “Ill done and undone / London so fair / We will build London / Bright in dark air” – occurs at other points in the drama, and the refrain – “A Church for us all and work for us all and God’s world for us all even unto this last” – was to be sung by the audience. Both sections are in a broad, four-beats-in-a-bar tempo and follow the predictable rhythms of the words. Unlike the music for other parts of the pageant, there is no indication of the orchestration for this song – trumpets and strings feature in the processional numbers, as does some four-part choral writing and divided choruses in more complex rhythmic passages.

Eliot was known to have a good ear for accents and he most probably relished the opportunity to compose vernacular dialogue. This collaboration is possibly the closest Eliot ever came to the writing of actual music and he remained guarded as to his own musical competence – “I am quite unqualified to criticise or praise, technically, but I write as a collaborator, to express my satisfaction” (letter to Shaw in Browne, 13). It is the choruses, with their sharp and economical insight into contemporary society and its failures of community, which are now considered to be the main literary value in The Rock. The chorus was an element of contemporary drama which had been revived in translations of Greek drama and by Yeats in his choral speech, and was taken up by Eliot in his later plays. These passages from The Rock, despite their choral nature, represent what Eliot, not what a dramatic character, has to say to an audience and are thus enduring personal statements.²⁹ E. Martin Browne has shown with the aid of an original draft how Eliot crafted the final chorus around elements of a rhetorical structure used in music, the liturgical hymn *Gloria in Excelsis*, a device

²⁸ See Browne, 30-31.

²⁹ Eliot himself ascribes the choruses in The Rock to his “second voice” of poetry in ‘The Three Voices of Poetry’, On Poetry and Poets (London, 1957), 90-91.

used again in Murder in the Cathedral, and which recalls the use of material from Catholic hymns (such as the *Salve Regina*) in Ash-Wednesday. Eliot's invocations in this chorus, "O Light Invisible, we praise Thee!", "O Light Invisible, we worship Thee!" and "O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!", act as rhetorical waypoints with which to hold the structure together, paralleling the Latin words *Laudamus Te!*, *Benedicimus Te!*, and *Glorificamus Te!* extracted from the Mass. The care taken by Eliot over the crafting of this chorus (shown by Browne in his analysis) is possibly an instance of the musical patterning referred to earlier, in that a framework which is traditionally employed for a musical setting of words, is here being used for a chorus of voices in a drama.³⁰ Perhaps because of the strong emphasis on social concerns in The Rock, Eliot was motivated to become involved in its dissemination to a live audience through the media of music and drama. In Eliot's output as a whole, the project is a rare interaction of pragmatic and intellectual approaches to the question of music and the word.

Settings of Joyce's *Chamber Music*

Composers setting Eliot have tended to look towards the later works, but with regard to Joyce the texts are more evenly spread. Ulysses and Finnegans Wake have generated a number of settings in styles which are very distant from Joyce's own musical predilections, and his first volume of poetry, Chamber Music, has had especially wide-ranging appeal. Although the same composers have set very early and later Joyce, the settings form two distinct groups – those of poetry and those of prose. The settings of poetry are generally straightforward in matching notes to individual words, even those of Luciano Berio, whereas Joyce's prose has elicited a wider and more experimental variety of responses.

Chamber Music, Joyce's earliest volume of poetry, was published in 1907 and Joyce himself considered it suitable for musical treatment. Eliot, writing of Joyce's poems, said in 1943 that "...they are the work of a man who conceived a lyric poem as

³⁰ Eliot chose this chorus for a recording of his own poetry made in 1955, and lends to it a suitably religious intonation. T.S. Eliot reading (New York, 1955).

something to be set to music.”³¹ He even composed melodies of his own and enlisted friends to write out piano accompaniments for them – one example is “Bid Adieu”, number 11 from the collection, for which Edmund Pendleton, an American musician living in Paris, wrote the piano part. It was published in Paris in 1949. The first music using a Joyce text to reach the public was from Chamber Music, a setting of ‘O, it was out by Donnycarney’ by Adolph Mann, published in 1910.³² Perhaps because of the careful attention to rhythm and the scrupulous crafting of these poems, composers have generally responded with a respect for these elements and an awareness of the greater narrative which makes this collection a cycle of poems. The deceptive simplicity of the poems is an added difficulty for the composer wishing to set them to music. Otto Luening has pointed out that writing settings of Chamber Music was particularly challenging after a knowledge of such a different kind of writing as Ulysses.³³

Two of the most extensive groups of settings from this collection are by Geoffrey Molyneux Palmer and Samuel Barber. Palmer was an exact contemporary of Joyce and although born near London, spent most of his adult life living in Ireland. There is personal correspondence between Palmer and Joyce which shows the latter’s enthusiasm for the music, even though he never heard all of the pieces. Palmer’s setting of these poems is almost the only one to be conceived as a full cycle (the American Ross Lee Finney has written a cycle for all 36 poems) – indeed, thirty two of the thirty six poems were set and the work divided into two parts with Joyce’s thirteenth poem forming a bridge between them. This bi-partite structure, together with the narrative sequence given the poems by Joyce’s brother, Stanislaus, places Palmer’s setting within the great tradition of song-cycles by Schubert, Schumann and Brahms.³⁴

³¹ T.S. Eliot, ‘The Approach to James Joyce’, The Listener, vol.30, (October 14, 1943), 446-7.

³² Adolph Mann, Out by Donnycarney (London, 1910). Mann’s setting of this poem is straightforward and restrained and, like Palmer’s setting of this poem (see later in this chapter), suggests folk-song in the simplicity of its melody.

³³ See Timothy Martin and Ruth Bauerle, ‘The Voice from the Prompt Box: Otto Luening Remembers James Joyce in Zurich’, Journal of Modern Literature, vol.17, 1 (Summer 1990), 35-48.

³⁴ The arrangement of the poems in Chamber Music which forms the narrative sequence was made by Stanislaus Joyce. See letter of 09/10/06 in Letters of James Joyce ed. Richard Ellmann (London, 1966), vol. II, 172. Cited as Letters hereafter.

However, the music did not begin life as a cycle but as five isolated songs, the composition of which followed a letter from Palmer to Joyce of 1907 asking permission to set the recently published poetry. The five songs were sent to Joyce in Trieste in 1909, and gained his approval.³⁵ Settings of three more poems followed – ‘At that hour’, ‘Gentle lady’ and ‘O, it was out by Donnycarney’ - which Joyce liked even more, and then there began a long battle over the publication of the songs. Only a few of the songs had public performances and the cycle of thirty two was never published in Palmer’s lifetime (he died in 1957) – without Joyce’s expression of interest in them it is doubtful whether the music would have survived at all. Other letters follow in which Joyce tries to organise performances and insists on the quality of Palmer’s work. Following the positive reception of the first eight poems, Joyce tried to organise performances of his personal favourites – in Zurich in 1919, at a concert of Irish music to be given by the baritone Augustus Milner, and in Paris by the renowned tenor, John MacCormack, for whose voice Joyce wanted future songs to be written in the tenor range (see Letters III, 35). He also wrote to Palmer asking him to set the whole of Chamber Music, claiming he had conceived them as a “suite of songs” and that, had he been a musician, he would have set them himself.³⁶ Palmer was to spend almost thirty years on the composition of the cycle and, next to three cantatas and two operas based on Irish folklore, it became a major opus. Yet publication never occurred, Joyce failing to persuade Palmer to publish (possibly through the latter’s lack of funds) and eventually losing contact. The two never met, communicating only by letter. Joyce probably never knew of the completion of the cycle.

Although the manuscript was thought to be lost, following Palmer’s death it was traced and bought from the composer’s sisters by an American Joyce scholar in 1958. It then joined the university library at Carbondale at the University of Southern Illinois and was resurrected for performance as part of the Joyce centenary

³⁵ In Letters II, 227, “I am much honoured by your setting of my five songs.....I hope you will find a good singer for them as your music needs to be well sung”. The five poems set were ‘Strings in the earth and air’, ‘I would in that sweet bosom be’, ‘Who goes amid the green wood’, ‘O cool is the valley’ and ‘Winds of May’.

³⁶ Letters I, 67. Nearly twenty years later Joyce asked Palmer if he had set any of Pomes Penyeach (Letters III, 167).

celebrations in 1982, and again for a BBC Radio Three broadcast in 1987, before eventual publication by the American scholar Myra Russel in 1991.³⁷

Joyce's own reactions to musical settings of his work show a particular sensitivity to the way a composer responds to the detail of words. In one letter to Palmer of 1909 he admires the "setting of the parentheses in the first one and the way you reproduce the change of stress in the second one" (Letters II, 227). He praised Palmer's attention to the detail of the poems – both within them and the thematic relationships between them – and singled out 'At That Hour' for its sensitivity to the poet's intentions – "The rendering of 'Play on, invisible harps', & c. follows the change of the verse splendidly" (Letters I, 67). It was Joyce's own intention to effect an ideal marriage of words with their implied music in these poems in the manner of a renaissance ayre – the word "air" in its repetitions forms a kind of motif running through the poetry. Joyce once asked for a lute to be made for him by Dolmetsch, the instrument-maker, but a harpsichord was suggested instead as being more practical. The title page of the first edition of Chamber Music features a design incorporating a harpsichord on a classical stage set with columns, around which is wrapped fabric with a musical stave motif. The harpsichord suggests a throwback to earlier music, perhaps to the Elizabethan period of domestic music making, whilst the classical architecture suggests balance and proportion. These seem to be important attributes of these poems, which Joyce and composers who have set them have responded to.

Another favourite was the setting of 'O, it was out by Donnellycarney' (Joyce admired its "delicacy"), which he wanted sung at the 1919 Zurich concert and which he compared favourably to settings by Eugene Goossens (Letters III, 344). One other reason for Joyce's enthusiasm for a complete cycle was the poor fortune of the poems themselves – in the first ten years following composition, fewer than 100 copies of Chamber Music sold. It is no surprise that Joyce wished to be kept informed of the public response to Palmer's settings.

The music Palmer wrote for these poems is simple and direct, and mirrors the charm achieved through simplicity of Joyce's originals. The tunes are undemanding and the

³⁷ Geoffrey Molyneux Palmer, James Joyce's Chamber Music: the lost song settings ed. and with an introduction by M.T. Russel (Bloomington, 1993).

idiom traditional and, at times, such as in 'O sweetheart, hear you', and 'O, it was out by Donnellycarney', the sounds produced are like folk-song. It is likely that for this latter quality in his music, Palmer was influenced by Charles Villiers Stanford, who made extensive use of Irish folk tunes in his own music and who was Palmer's teacher at the Royal College of Music. The mood of the music follows the order of the poems, as arranged by Stanislaus Joyce, moving from the unknowing delight at falling in love to the troubles which the outside world brings to that love. Youthful optimism, in the manner of the sunnier side of Schubert, ends in isolation and despair, in both the simple major-key accompaniment of the Brahmsian 'Sleep now, O sleep now' and in the unexpectedly nightmarish menace of the final two songs, in which G major turns to G minor, and the final question, 'why have you left me alone?', hangs hauntingly over minimal accompaniment. The movement through the seasons which characterises the cycle is audible in the changing moods of Palmer's settings.

Palmer responds to Joyce's fascination with physical sound, so much a part of Ulysses, as has been seen. Besides the recognition of the wintry waters and winds in the piano part in 'All day I hear the noise of waters', and the obvious thundering and clanging in 'I hear an army', Palmer sensitively evokes the sounds of the harp's plucked strings in 'At that hour when all things have repose' in the piano's arpeggiated chords. Other details include the lightly skipping sounds of nature in 'Who goes amid the green wood', and the sighing of the trees in descending arpeggiated figures in 'From dewy dreams, my soul, arise', as well as the composer sharing Joyce's own amusement at the chamber pot joke (said to be behind the title of the collection) with the tinkling piano in 'Thou leanest to the shell of night'.

There is more to Palmer's work than just the detail of individual songs. Joyce's idea of a "suite" of songs is honoured in the significant key relationships and thematic references between the songs. In 'At that hour' there is a brief recalling of the melodic material of the first song, simply because Joyce too revisits the same ideas – "Soft sweet music in the air above, / And in the earth below" (III) and "Strings in the earth and air / Make music sweet" (I). Evidence that this is a song-cycle appears in the double setting of 'Go seek her out', at the end of Part One and at the start of Part Two, though slightly modified the second time; with the repetition of material from 'The twilight turns from amethyst'(Part One) in 'Love came to us in time gone by' (Part

Two), as the protagonist recalls a happier past when love was new (reflecting the Blakean tendencies of the collection in Joyce's opposition of innocence and experience); and with the preference for through-composed settings in the second part. This latter feature, where several songs follow each other without a pause (examples are nos. 21-23, 24-27, and the final two songs), requires Palmer to write increasingly elaborate bridge passages in the piano accompaniment – notably the dramatic link between nos. 26 and 27, and that between the last two songs in which the sudden triplets set the scene for the violent conclusion in evoking the sound of approaching horses. This procedure suggests a Wagnerian sense of continuity, which is also present in the song-cycles of Othmar Schoeck, whose cycle Lebendig Begraben (see below) forms a continuous whole out of settings of many different poems. The vocal lines in these settings from the second half of Palmer's cycle are also more complex in shape and more troubled in mood.

Joyce's enthusiasm for these settings by Palmer clearly stems from their simplicity and suggestion of traditional elements of Irish folk-music. The poet's painstakingly accurate meters and rhyme schemes when writing these poems are perhaps behind Palmer's uncomplicated response to them and may also have prompted so many other composers after Palmer to set them – Eugene Goossens (who set six of the poems, not in narrative sequence and concentrating on the latter end of the cycle), Samuel Barber, Karel Szymanowski (his Four Songs, op.54 from 1949; short settings with no evident narrative), Luciano Berio, and David del Tredici among them. There is also a reduced "cycle" by the Dutch composer Rudolf Mengelberg, nephew of the conductor Willem Mengelberg, dating from the early 1950's.³⁸ Nine poems are set in sequence and the cycle is dedicated to the conductor Bruno Walter. This wide range of responses is despite the fact that the poems contain little, a few portmanteau words excepted, which anticipates Joyce's later prose style, the area of his writing which has attracted most musical attention from a structural perspective.

³⁸ Eugene Goossens, Chamber Music. Six Songs for Medium Voice (London, 1930); Samuel Barber, Three Songs for Voice and Piano set to Poems from "Chamber Music" by James Joyce (New York, 1939); Karol Szymanowski, Four Songs for high voice and piano, op.54 (Cracow, 1949); Luciano Berio, Chamber Music (Milan, 1954); David Del Tredici, Four Songs on James Joyce (New York, 1974); Rudolf Mengelberg, Chamber Music. A cycle of songs for medium voice and piano (Amsterdam, 1952?).

Another Anglo-Irish composer, E.J. Moeran, is one of the musicians who has responded to the cyclical element in Chamber Music. Although he only set seven poems, published in 1930 as Seven Poems by James Joyce, Moeran keeps Joyce's order, to maintain the narrative, writing songs which become progressively longer and more reflective. Indeed, as claimed in a letter to Palmer, it was partly Joyce's intention in writing the poems that they be set as a cycle (Letters I, 67), even though the eventual order was fixed by Stanislaus Joyce. A note in Moeran's score insists that if more than one song is performed, they must be done in sequence. There is also a flashback to the first song in the last, 'Now, O now, in this brown land' (not set by Palmer), which recalls the simple rocking rhythm used in 'Strings in the earth and air' - 6/8 in the first song, now in 6/4. This is the longest of the songs, and to mirror the more complex feelings associated with the end of the cycle, and the end of the love affair, Moeran breaks up the phrase lengths in the second stanza so they do not always correspond to the line lengths. As in Palmer's settings, the vocal lines of the later poems become more agitated, lingering over individual words, such as "kiss" in Moeran's setting of the fifth poem, and "heart" in the sixth. Even so, Moeran is not able to resist reacting to the picturesque details of nature in 'Rain has fallen' (neither is Barber in his setting) as the gently dripping accompaniment shows. The settings of 'O, it was out by Donnycarney' are quite different. In contrast to Palmer's folk-song approach, Moeran begins uncertainly with harmonic wandering in the piano part and a vocal line which sounds nearly atonal until joined by the accompaniment to confirm the harmony.

Samuel Barber set three poems from Chamber Music as a single group, published in 1939 as Three Songs for Voice and Piano, and chose to illustrate the restless, wintry end of the cycle in 'Rain has fallen', 'Sleep now' and 'I hear an army'. The songs were written in two versions, one for "medium" and one for "high" voice. In the first song there is a build-up towards the word "heart" similar to that heard in the Moeran setting, and accompaniments are either stark and minimal, or nightmarishly dramatic. Even though these songs do not form part of a cycle, they are worth mentioning for the striking setting of 'I hear an army'. Like Palmer, Barber sees this poem as a dramatic culmination and treats it accordingly. The violent language certainly distinguishes it from the rest of the poems in Chamber Music, perhaps what prompted Ezra Pound to anthologise the poem in Des Imagistes (1914). The last stanza of

Barber's 'I hear an army' recalls a Schubertian journey of death in the headlong galloping effects of the piano part. There are frequent changes of metre in the first twelve bars and the music proceeds in a noisy and disturbed manner before relenting for the words "My heart, have you no wisdom thus to despair?" (marked "*p*[iano] with sudden intensity"), only to rise again for the final gruff *fortissimo* and *sforzando* assault on the final line. This is in brazen contrast to Palmer's sense of desolation here. However, in common with Palmer there is abundant contrast in the song, giving the impression of a very short cantata or operatic scene, as if many short movements have been put together. The escalation of emotions through Joyce's cycle seems to find expression in this setting, despite the fact that only two other songs precede it.

It is likely that Barber read Joyce widely as he was attracted to more than just the early poems. The three songs from Chamber Music are not the only settings Barber made of Joyce texts. 'Solitary Hotel' (1968) is a short song with words from the Ithaca episode of Ulysses, more like a miniature scene with its harmonies suggesting jazz and dramatic contrasts in pace and dynamics. There are three further settings from Chamber Music, published posthumously, and two short settings from Finnegans Wake, Nuvoletta (1947), in which Barber seems to enjoy the puns with words as much as Joyce did, and Fadograph of a Yestern Scene (1971).

Perhaps it is to be expected that these composers have set Chamber Music in a conventional idiom – neither Palmer nor Moeran were radical experimentalists, and Barber was yet to write music with the avant-garde technique of his later works. Luciano Berio's three songs from this collection are also early works, but although they adumbrate elements of his later experimentation and the idiom is serial, the matching of words to notes is straightforward, probably owing to Joyce's insistent rhythms. Dating from 1953 they are scored for voice (that of Berio's first wife, Cathy Berberian) and a small instrumental ensemble of harp, clarinet and cello. There is no cyclical element as the poems chosen are 'Strings in the earth' (number 1), 'All day I hear the noise of waters' (number 35) and then 'Winds of May' (number 9). It is clear that Berio is responding to physical sound in Joyce's poems – both to the idea of sound and the sounds of the words themselves. The first two poems have many references to sound and the third has a strong rhythmic momentum. The "invisible harps" of Joyce's third poem are real here as that instrument opens the first song,

followed by the voice, clarinet and then cello. At the words “fingers straying / Upon an instrument” the sounds are purely instrumental as the voice is instructed to hum along with the trio – ‘*quasi bocca chiusa*’, as if in blending with them the voice has become an extra instrument.

Berio entitles the next song ‘Monotone’ as the vocal line is, indeed, a monotone, apart from sudden glides up and downwards at “To and fro”. Much is made of Joyce’s alliterating “m” sounds in the first stanza (again ‘*bocca chiusa*’), which are the sounds within the poem, the more effective in the voice for being on one note. The accompanying slides on the cello are an illustration of the sounds outside the poem, those of the desolate waters which offer no solace to the dejected lover.

‘Winds of May’ is an alternation of speech and song and a response to the rhythmic elements of the poem. Berio evidently feels there is no other adequate way of presenting the first six lines other than as speech rhythms, so he composes a short instrumental prelude to compensate. Following these spoken lines, which are to be delivered in alternating bars of 3/4 and 5/4 rhythms, the next section – ‘Welladay! Welladay!...’ – is sung, only to be succeeded by the final chuckling half-line, ‘...when love is away!’, in half-speech. A brief instrumental postlude affirms the symmetry. It is significant that Berio is moving away from a conventional setting of words to notes at definite pitches, even in these poems. In his setting of text from Ulysses he adopts an utterly different approach to the problem of making music from words.

The Joyce Book

Before considering Ulysses, mention must be made of another significant setting of Joyce’s poetry. This time the text is the collection of thirteen poems entitled Pomes Penyeach, which appeared in 1927. The poems were set by thirteen different composers and bound together in a publication with the title The Joyce Book, and Joyce’s comments on these pieces are his only other known responses to settings of his words.

Edited by Herbert Hughes and published by The Sylvan Press and Humphrey Milford at Oxford University Press, The Joyce Book was an idea born at a festival of contemporary music in Paris in 1929, organised by Elisabeth Sprague Coolidge. After the festival the content was planned by Hughes and Arthur Bliss, but none of the composers was to be paid and so there were difficulties of organisation and publication. Augustus John provided a portrait of Joyce for the frontispiece and Padraic Colum penned an essay on him. The book was designed by Hubert Foss, of OUP, bound in silk and dated 1932. It appeared in a limited edition in 1933 and hasn't been printed since. For Hughes and Bliss, organisers of The Joyce Book, the collection Pomes Penyeach probably had affinities with Chamber Music in mood and content, for Hughes wrote in a note to the book, "The subjective association of chamber music – that is, of intimate music – with the poetry of Joyce was to us like the association of wind and wave....".³⁹ Yet the collection, mostly written in Trieste and Zurich over a six-year period, was not a cycle but a series of short lyrics capturing single moments of experience. Consequently, The Joyce Book emerges as a disparate group of vignettes by well-known musicians of the time, in which it is unnecessary to search for unifying material. Joyce discussed Bliss' setting in detail with the composer and wrote to him in a letter that it was his favourite. However, it is also claimed by Peter Dickinson, in his spoken introduction to a BBC Radio 3 broadcast of 11/02/1982, that Joyce liked the Moeran setting best.⁴⁰

Besides the 13 settings of poetry to music, there is a Prologue (not set to music) by the Irish Nationalist and friend of Joyce, James Stephens, and a prose Epilogue by the Symbolist poet Arthur Symons. The music ranges from the traditionally English art / folk-song idiom (settings by E.J. Moeran, John Ireland, Bliss) to the experimental – Roger Sessions' angularity of phrase and dissonances at the beginning and end of his setting, Antheil's alternation of dissonance with consonance, and the dislocated rhythms and astringent harmony to evoke the violent, nightmare memory in the example by Eugene Goossens. This latter, a setting of Joyce's 'A Memory of the Players in a Mirror at Midnight', is the most disturbed and threatening piece in the

³⁹ Editor's Note to The Joyce Book ed. Herbert Hughes (London, 1933).

⁴⁰ See Letters III, 338, in which Joyce credits all three composers' work, yet in an earlier letter he singles out Bliss' as the best setting (Letters III, 287). See also Letters III, 276, in which Joyce thanks Arnold Bax for his contribution to The Joyce Book.

collection and these are features which reflect the words of the poem. The effects of horrors in the night which prevent sleep are achieved by a generally low-lying vocal line suggesting darkness, frequent bursts of loud music and monosyllabic words evoking violence, such as “Gnash”, “Lash”, “Harsh” and “Pluck” marked *forte*, unpredictable changes of metre, and an instruction to “Emphasize the *words* rather than the melodic line! (almost ‘sprechgesang’).”⁴¹ However, like the other settings in the collection, this is one musician’s response to the words of one isolated poem, and any evidence of a cyclical thread is absent from The Joyce Book.

Settings of major Joyce texts

It seems to be more useful to discuss settings of poetry and settings of prose separately, even if this means considering the same composer twice in different sections, simply because musical reaction to the prose has been significantly different in nearly every area. Two major figures of the musical avant-garde, Luciano Berio and Pierre Boulez, have used Ulysses and Finnegans Wake as sources and/or texts for their music, together with John Cage, who has worked with the latter novel. The reactions of these composers have been largely conceptual or acoustically focussed, to the extent that the term “setting” can no longer be meaningfully applied to them. An attempt at more conventional settings has been made by the Hungarian composer, Mátyás Seiber, introduced in the previous chapter. I will avoid too much reference to Finnegans Wake as music occasioned by this work requires its own thesis.

Seiber has found Joyce’s prose to be pregnant with suggestion for the serialist composer. As well as writing a cantata based on passages from Ulysses, Seiber also published Three Fragments from “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man” (1958), twelve-tone music for speaker, mixed (wordless) chorus and instrumental ensemble. The texts are lifted from poetic or dramatic sections of the novel – the vision on the beach (“A veiled sunlight lit up faintly the grey sheet of water...” and “He closed his eyes in the languor of sleep...”) for the first and third movements, and the vision of

⁴¹ The Joyce Book, 64.

Hell (“The last day had come...”) for the second.⁴² It is not surprising that the scene on the beach should preoccupy the composer so much as the writing is extremely sensitive both to colour and to what it is like to be aware of the aesthetic significance of nature and be articulating this at the same time.

Like Seiber’s earlier cantata from Ulysses, the treatment of the words is conservative. The wordless chorus punctuates the speaker’s lines in the first movement as the clarinet solo represents the sound of the “nebulous music” and the westward voyaging clouds. Choral shrieks are accompanied by violent and discordant percussion in the second movement (‘Feroce’), and Seiber requires the speaker’s delivery to be high-pitched and excited, and the woodwind to play shrilly as they imitate blasts on the angelical trumpet. The third movement returns to a slow tempo as Joyce’s “distant pools” are reflected in the fading chorus. The result is a miniature cycle, slow-fast-slow, suggesting an A – B – A’ structure, whereby the central section exists as a means of modifying the outer sections. In returning to the beach vision from Joyce’s text, Seiber treats the hell-fire passage as interpolation rather than separate episode, another angle from which to view the visionary material. Indeed, more than creating a structural whole from passages of text which inter-relate, or focusing on individual words for their significance in the novel, it seems to be the deliberate contrast in Joyce’s style of language which interests Seiber most. Using contrasting styles of writing for different sections of a piece is one aspect of text-setting which ensures a satisfying musical whole, and a return to the opening material can reveal the contrasting section as a flashback in Stephen’s mind, or as a means of reassessing the reflective text in the light of experience – here, extra knowledge given to the listener about Stephen’s past.

Once again, a composer has used a narrative structure in setting Joyce, even though in this case the architecture is the composer’s own. Ulysses, a cantata for tenor solo, chorus and orchestra, dates from a decade earlier (1948) and is a large-scale setting of Joyce’s prose, lasting around 45 minutes. There are five movements, suggesting an arch-form, and the text is taken exclusively from the ‘Ithaca’ episode of the novel. There is a part for tenor solo voice which weaves in and out of the choral texture in a

⁴² Excerpts taken from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Harmondsworth, 1960), 167, 173 and 113, respectively.

late-romantic manner, and the fourth movement even has the nineteenth-century title 'Nocturne – Intermezzo', though Seiber may simply be playing along with Joyce's sense of humour in employing elaborate language to describe Bloom and Stephen's nocturnal street conversation.

In the first three movements the tenor solo performs the role of questioner in the mock-catechistic dialogue, the chorus providing the answers. Their roles are briefly transferred in the fourth movement, and there follows thereafter a blending together of soloist and chorus, significant if we are to notice the reappearance of the "heaventree" motif in Joyce's text and the emergence of the theme of Utopia in the last section. Although Seiber cuts Joyce's text slightly, the original narrative order is maintained. The piece has its own musical logic in the return of the opening material and dark atmosphere in the last movement (a technique also used in the later Three Fragments), suggesting the symmetry of the arch. There is also a repetition in this movement of a significant climax from the first movement – on "stars" in the first and on "Utopia" in the fifth, with similar musical material used for both – followed by a closing section for wordless chorus, as if the words have been subsumed by night. There are many examples of imitative and fugal writing in the piece, especially in the second and, apex-like, third movements, though there is nothing to suggest that this is born of anything in Joyce's writing beyond the surface meanings of the words, denoting the disparateness of infinite matter in the universe. The 'Nocturne' fourth movement illustrates the words atmospherically ("Emergence of nocturnal crepuscular animals....") with orchestration redolent of Bartók's "night-music" sounds. Effects include high woodwind, string harmonics, harp and fragments of percussion. Overall there is little that is radically experimental musically about this piece, contrary to what might have been expected from the choice of text.

As has been seen in the extract from Music Survey quoted in the previous chapter, Seiber was interested in Joyce's method of construction and the recurrence of motifs within a text.⁴³ Ulysses is an unusual and challenging text to choose – the experimentation with styles in recent episodes all but disappears as Joyce rejects description for cataloguing and analysing phenomena from the natural and scientific

⁴³ Mátyás Seiber, 'A Note on "Ulysses"', Music Survey ed. Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller, vol.3 (1951), 263.

worlds. Then within this strange poetry of facts, the line “The heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit” appears like a visitor from another style. This line, a reference to the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, represented by Stephen as he leaves Bloom’s house for his own, develops a theological parallel between the two main characters, and the Father and Son of Man. In the ‘Circe’ episode there are parallels with the Crucifixion when Stephen is rejected by Lynch (Judas) and is knocked down by Privates Carr and Compton in front of the angry crowd. The Father-Son relationship is then pursued in the ‘Eumaeus’ episode as Bloom takes responsibility for the wounded Stephen, and the two share discussions. The interaction develops into a fusion of identities in ‘Ithaca’, in which the names Stoom and Blephen are first used (‘Ithaca’, 558 - references are from James Joyce, Ulysses (Harmondsworth, 1986)), and eventually to the passage set by Seiber in which the sky becomes Heaven (‘Ithaca’, 573 onwards). It seems Seiber chose this section of the novel largely for the poetic quality of this line, yet what follows is symbolic of Ulysses as a whole. Bloom’s meditations on the vastness of the universe, the possibility of life existing on other planets, and man’s place within the totality of history, seem momentarily to normalise the analytical style and render it suitable to its subject. For a moment we are given a microcosm of the novel – two figures wandering around a large city over the course of hundreds of pages and happening to meet – within a macrocosmic frame of reference to geological periods, galaxies and constellations, and mathematical calculation. With the Ascension theme marking a significant point in the Christian symbolism of the novel also at this point, there is evidence to show that by progressively integrating the tenor solo into the vocal textures, as if mirroring the theme of man against an external mass of matter and man as part of that matter (the Utopia section), Seiber’s music is responding to the importance of this passage in the novel as a whole.

If Seiber’s cantata represents a relatively conventional way of setting text to music, Luciano Berio, in Thema (Omaggio à Joyce) from 1958, a musical rendering of words from the ‘Sirens’ episode of Ulysses, creates something more radical. However, the text that Berio chooses to “set”, the opening ‘overture’ or prelude to the chapter, is problematic semantically as it only represents in contracted form meanings which will later become apparent in the body of the chapter. This is a response to the pure sonic effects of Joyce’s writing and an attempt to exaggerate and reorder certain phonetic

elements of the text for presentation as real sound. In his settings from Chamber Music Berio showed interest in the physical sound of Joyce's words, and this work goes a stage further.

The piece is an electro-acoustic composition, assembled on tape from pre-recorded natural sounds. The natural sounds are the voice of the singer Cathy Berberian reading part of the prelude to the 'Sirens' episode, fragments of which are superimposed on themselves. Berio collects together similar sounds from different words and syllables, ordering them accordingly into scales of vowels and consonants, and then in terms of volume, so that the original text is completely broken up and distorted. This often makes Joyce's words hard to recognise. When they are decipherable, the words are meaningless because of the absence of context that Joyce later provides in the novel. The result is a continuous wash of sound.

The title is perhaps significant as the text selected is the ultimate choice to represent Joyce's interest in the links between sounds and words. This piece is a response to Joyce the musical writer, rather than to a particular text by Joyce. There is no interpretation of words or attention given to their semantic associations, but a recognition of the sound potential of Joyce's arrangement of words, once the composer is freed from their original contexts. The structure of this seven-minute piece is largely tri-partite, with a beginning and ending based around recognisable words as the basis of sound experiments, and a central section in which it is all but impossible to hear the original text. The sounds originate from words even though they cannot be heard as such. Although the piece sounds electronic at some points, all the sounds – birds chirping, wind, insect vibrations, the flow of electricity – are in fact distortions of the human voice produced by accelerating, superimposing and looping. Syllables and phonemes are clustered together, single phonemes developed and merged into others. This is congruent with Joyce's original – phonemes such as /s/ ("soft", "stars", "rose", "*Sonnez*", "sail", "plash", "Hiss"), /u:/ ("blew", "Blue", "Bloom") and /b:/ ("absorbs", "War", "All", "Horn") are lengthened then abstracted into other sounds. Consonant clusters, such as /bl/, are also used ("Blue Bloom"). One of Berio's compositional methods is to present one phoneme through a recognisable word, /s/ in "spiked", and then merge it with another which then takes over as the dominant sound, /u:/ in "Bloom". This latter sound is then developed into patterns

divorced from the original. However, for the listener the sound often arrives before the recognisable word it is derived from – “Bloom” here starts as a vibration. This is a little like hearing a variation before the theme and adds to the complexity of the piece.⁴⁴

In Thema, Berio is questioning the distinction between sound and word. The piece is an exploration of the border ground between these two definitions – at what point does a word become pure sound and vice-versa. But this is, essentially, an extension of something Joyce has already suggested in the printed text. The prelude itself presents the abstract before the concrete, the essence before the whole, and focuses the reader’s attention on similarities of sound between words, rather than their meanings or associations. In a more detailed example, a fragment like “Goodgod henev erheard inall” (‘Sirens’, 210) engages in a similar game with words and sounds. The grouping of words is unfamiliar to the reader, who is forced to “hear” them in order to catch the sense. Joyce has written sounds, not words, but sounds which have meaning. Berio extends this joke into actual sound.

It could be argued that the musical element has already been written by Joyce himself. Thema is really a *reading* of Joyce’s original words that is dissolved into sustained sound according to parameters which are already inherent in the text. Thus the reader of Ulysses is challenged by this piece to consider whether, by silent reading, he is truly reading the words, and whether “reading” and “words” can have their full meaning without being heard. Berio makes a case for a deeper understanding of this section of Ulysses, often said to be nonsensical without the rest of the chapter. By turning it into music, he has given the words a temporal dimension, in which the relationships between the words may be better appreciated. The silent reader of this prelude is limited by his own (irregular) speed of reading and will thus miss certain sonic connections between words. Even someone reading aloud at a regular speed would not be able to sustain the sounds long enough for them to resonate towards the succeeding ones. Berio himself said he wished to

establish a new relationship between speech and

⁴⁴ Musical example 10 (on accompanying tape). The most direct way of appreciating this description is to hear the piece, hence I have included it on the examples tape.

music, in which a continuous metamorphosis of one into the other can be developed. Thus, through a reorganization and transformation of the phonetic and semantic elements of Joyce's text, Mr Bloom's day in Dublin... briefly takes another direction, where it is no longer possible to distinguish between word and sound, between sound and noise, between poetry and music, but where we once more become aware of the relative nature of these distinctions....⁴⁵

Berio also claims he is transforming a poetic experience into a musical one. Yet he may also be reinterpreting the poetry, provided we are to see the text thus, once the reader returns to the printed page after listening. Seiber, in his Ulysses cantata, enhances certain poetic sections of the text by focusing on the ideas which they suggest semantically. Berio, on the other hand, deliberately avoids the semantics of Joyce's text (as his choice of text reflects) and starts from a base which is purely phonological. If there are any semantic constructs built around these they are questions about the nature of language derived from Joyce's verbal arrangement.

Berio's Thema is a dissolution of text into sound, or an intensification of sound already implied. Pierre Boulez (b.1925), a composer who has attempted to incorporate the dense syntax of Mallarmé's poetry into his own work, has also reacted to mathematical and structural issues in Joyce's prose. Although he was interested principally in Finnegans Wake, a text beyond the scope of this chapter, Boulez's ideas are relevant in a small way to some of the procedures used in Ulysses. His preoccupation with theoretical models such as the twelve-tone system, which he adopted in 1945, and interest in a variety of styles has made his music impenetrable for many, yet the Joyce reader may find an affinity with the frequent games with sounds and numbers in his music. Boulez has not, to date, used any specific Joyce text in his music but since being introduced to Finnegans Wake in 1949 by John Cage, another Joyce enthusiast, has admired its self-awareness, structural complexity and

⁴⁵ Timothy S. Murphy, 'Music After Joyce: The Post-Serial Avant-Garde' from <http://www.2street.com/hjs/murphy>, page 6.

open-endedness.⁴⁶ This latter feature relates to the circularity of the whole text and the extent to which a reader's interpretation of a particular word or phrase may determine or influence the meaning of subsequent material. Similar choices are open to the performer of Boulez's music in examples where the piece is not a fully-finished structure totally controlled by its author, but open to reorganisation and reordering:

I find the concept of works as independent fragments
increasingly alien, and I have a marked preference
for large structural groups centred on a cluster of
determinate possibilities (Joyce's influence again).⁴⁷

This procedure is in evidence in the Third Piano Sonata, a composition also influenced by the visual arts and whose five sections and their sub-sections may be performed in several different combinations according to preference. Although all of the musical material is fully worked-out, the conclusion of the piece is determined by the performer's choice of beginning. Each performance must differ according to choices made spontaneously by the performer. Boulez's deliberate delay in completing the piece after its initial 1958 appearance has resonances with the original Work in Progress title for Finnegans Wake. The 'open-work' aesthetic, previously alien to Boulez, may have been a reaction to the music of John Cage, himself highly influenced by Joyce.

The number of permutations for performance is practically infinite, for the third movement – 'Constellation' – is made up of many short fragments, none more than half a minute in duration, which must all be performed without repetition, but in any order. In the sonata as a whole one may choose to move from complexity to simplicity, or vice-versa, or any other combination which could yield a radically different interpretation of the work. In a further clarification of this idea Boulez has commented:

It must be our concern in the future to follow the

⁴⁶ See letter to Cage of 12/01/50 in The Boulez-Cage Correspondence translated and ed. Robert Samuels (Cambridge, 1993), 46.

⁴⁷ Orientations. Collected writings by Pierre Boulez ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, translated by Martin Cooper (London, 1986), 148. Cited as Orientations hereafter.

examples of Joyce and Mallarmé and to jettison the concept of a work as a simple journey starting with a departure and ending with an arrival.... As against this classical procedure the idea of a maze seems to me the most important recent innovation in the creative sphere.....The modern conception of a maze in a work of art is certainly one of the most considerable advances in Western thought, and one upon which it is impossible to go back.

(Orientations, 144-5)

Musicians long before Boulez have attempted to break away from the directional mode of composing, and Boulez's remarks recall the Modernist interest in compositional models from the East (see especially the section on this subject in Chapter Three). But the fact that literary structures have here prompted an interest in chance procedures, even if they are "organised" chances, is reflected in the titles of some sections of Boulez's sonata – 'Glose', 'Commentaire', 'Texte'. Its composer has actually commented that in the writing of the sonata "It may well be that literary affiliations played a more important part than purely musical considerations" (Orientations, 143). The value of literature is not its existence as a referential source, or as text to be set to music, an exercise which Boulez considers superficial, but in its architecture – "...I believe that some writers at the present time have gone much further than composers in the organisation, the actual mental structure, of their works" (Orientations, 142).

Joyce does not directly offer such possibilities of open-endedness in Ulysses as Boulez does in the Third Sonata, but comes close to suggesting them in the 'Wandering Rocks' episode. This also has something of the labyrinth about it and Joyce even bought and played a game called "Labyrinth" during the composition of the episode in Zurich.⁴⁸ The order of this chapter's nineteen fragments is not especially important since they often tell the same story from different viewpoints. However, although the reader to an extent has freedom of movement here, in theory being able, if not instructed, to read in any order, this does not change the

⁴⁸ See Frank Budgen, James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses' (Oxford, 1972), 125. Cited as Budgen hereafter.

interpretation of the action or offer variant meanings of the entire episode. Frank Budgen's description of Joyce's working methods in 'Wandering Rocks' suggest the mathematical precision of design rather than literary crafting: "To see Joyce at work on the *Wandering Rocks* was to see an engineer at work with compass and slide-rule, a surveyor with theodolite and measuring chain..." (Budgen, 123). The question of circularity, and the extent to which the order of the written material is exclusively within the author's control, are issues which become more relevant in Finnegans Wake.

Joyce, Schoeck and Antheil

It has been seen how composers have reacted to Joyce's later work with more complex and abstract compositional methods than were used for the early poems. There is, firstly, only limited evidence of Joyce's response to the settings of early works. Joyce was not, of course, alive at the time of the serial compositions to respond to them and even his reactions to the early settings seem more like enthusiasm tempered with diplomacy, than carefully considered criticism. His musical interests and opinions are perhaps better represented by what is known about his association with the Swiss composer Othmar Schoeck, and with George Antheil, both of whom he admired.

Joyce's response to a song-cycle he heard in 1935 in Zurich shows another instance of his sensitivity to the musical setting of words. There he attended a performance of a lengthy suite of 14 songs for solo baritone and large orchestra set by Othmar Schoeck (1886-1954). The piece was entitled Lebendig Begraben (1926), the macabre experience of a man buried alive and his vain struggle for life, based on poems by Gottfried Keller. Schoeck set many leading poets to music, including Mörike, Hesse and Eichendorff, and was the last of the major nineteenth-century lieder composers to write song-cycles. Joyce so admired Schoeck's handling of the texts in Lebendig Begraben that he was moved to translate one of Keller's more bizarre poems, 'Da hab' ich gar die Rose aufgegessen' (no.8 in Schoeck's cycle), in which the buried man eats a rose thrown into his coffin. This translation was itself later set by Samuel

Barber.⁴⁹ From Joyce's letters there is truly lavish praise heaped on Schoeck as a writer of vocal music – "...he stands head and shoulders over Stravinsky and Antheil as composer for orchestra and voice....".⁵⁰ The two met in Zurich, Schoeck being a figure who attracted attention more from writers around him than from other composers. The piece, whose publication post-dates *Ulysses* by only four years, may have attracted Joyce because of its stream-of-consciousness- like construction. All the songs run into each other without a break, giving the effect of a sustained monologue with orchestra. There is no real organicism in the piece as the motifs develop within the songs rather than between them, yet the long spell of continuous music sung by the same singer gives the impression of a single mental narrative.

Despite the above dismissal of George Antheil, Joyce was closely connected with this American composer living in Paris. It is even claimed by Antheil that Joyce wrote articles for French magazines about his music.⁵¹ Joyce and Antheil worked for some time on an 'electric opera', "Mr. Bloom and the Cyclops", based on the 'Cyclops' episode in *Ulysses*, a project which was later abandoned. The idea may have come from discussions with Jarnach and Busoni in Zurich. Unusually for Joyce the sound world was percussive rather than melodic, the piece being scored for 16 mechanical pianos, 8 xylophones, gramophone recordings of orchestral music, 4 bass drums, 4 buzzers, 2 electric motors and amplified voice with chorus. This seems to reflect Antheil's fascination with technology more than Joyce's opinions on word-setting, and recalls the composer's earlier "Ballet Mécanique" – the singers were to be directed off-stage, their words mimed by dancers. Indeed, one of the reasons the opera was unfinished may have concerned the lack of suitable technology at the time to realise Antheil's ambitions. In the three pages of score which survive, there are only three bars of music and one sentence of text (some seven seconds' worth in total), a situation which makes any useful commentary on how the words were set impractical.

⁴⁹ See Sebastian D.G. Knowles, 'Opus Posthumous: James Joyce, Gottfried Keller, Othmar Schoeck, and Samuel Barber' in Sebastian D.G. Knowles ed., *Bronze by Gold. The Music of Joyce* (New York and London, 1999), 107-49. Cited as Knowles hereafter.

⁵⁰ *Letters* I, 356.

⁵¹ See Paul Martin, "Mr. Bloom and the Cyclops": Joyce and Antheil's Unfinished "Opéra Mécanique" in Knowles, 91-105 (94).

Conclusion

When writing about the influences of music and musicians on writers of poetry and prose I believe it is of immense value to consider the effects those literary works had on subsequent composers. However, assessing a representative sample of settings of Eliot and Joyce yields few straightforward generalisations. The personalities involved in writing the music are as diverse as the work they are responding to. Moreover, not every composer chooses to convey an essence of the whole piece they are setting, or even to read it in its entirety, and this may trouble listeners expecting an aural version of the text with which they are familiar.

However, it can be seen from an overview of these settings that Eliot's work generally becomes more conventional towards the end of his writing career, especially when comparing Four Quartets with The Waste Land, and that Joyce's becomes more radical. The Eliot of Four Quartets can even be seen as a traditionalist returning to Symbolist values, when compared to the Joyce of Finnegans Wake. Of the composers who have set Four Quartets, none appear to have responded to the structural aspects of the poems which Eliot himself considered their musical qualities, preferring instead to focus on lyrical interludes. It may be ironic that these areas of his poetry which have been so thoroughly scrutinised by Eliot and his critics, have been largely ignored by active musicians, or it may be inevitable. It is, of course, up to the musician which aspects of a poem he or she responds to, and the intentions of the author, however relevant to music, must remain external. However, if one accepts that it is inevitable for composers to disregard the larger canvas, one must guard against the thought that Eliot's music was just a mental construct, an unheard music which was never intended to be put into real sound. One fact that complicates the setting of poetry is the words themselves and how much they should influence the whole design. Certain words of a poem, especially those of a lyrical nature, may be a distraction from its overall construction and prompt the composer into setting short extracts. If a purely instrumental or orchestral piece were based on The Waste Land or Four Quartets, in an attempt to grasp their entirety, this would be experimental indeed, an ultimate dispensing with words in order to discover whether Eliot's language can be wholly "translated" into another. An alternative possibility, as I have mentioned in

connection with Four Quartets, would be an operatic or dramatic cantata version of Eliot's texts.

With composers who have set Joyce there is definitely a pattern to the choices of text and methods of setting. Responses to the early poetry respect Joyce's concern for metre and simplicity, as well as any narrative element, and these have been particularly wide-ranging, detailed and sensitive. Settings of Joyce's prose are divided between the camps of Seiber and Berio (also including John Cage if Finnegans Wake is to be considered), the latter's engagement with more abstract methods of setting a text to musical sounds questioning whether the words on the page are contained solely within a literary identity.

If a general conclusion is to be reached, it is perhaps that the more the text for setting has a structure in which individual parts form a whole, by organic development, the more transparent the music will be for analysis. A composer setting more than seven or eight poems from Chamber Music, as Palmer did for example, will have a framework of a progressing narrative with which to work, and opportunities to re-use early material later on to indicate development, or to link songs together where there is a clear continuity of action or mood. It is a much more arbitrary and subjective task to analyse a setting of a single poem or lyric abstracted from a larger work, or of short prose extracts from a novel. For a musical setting of a text to have meaning beyond that intended by the author of the words, the possibilities are greatly multiplied when the composer employs the kind of self-referentiality practised by authors themselves (Joyce in Ulysses is a prime example), by setting up patterns of musical material and breaking them, or by assigning material to specific words, characters or themes and using them in new combinations.

Perhaps because post-modern musical composition has more completely severed its roots from historical models, there is more of a trade in abstract ideas and the language to describe these, than in materials between literature, music and art. Olivier Messiaen, in Couleurs de la cite céleste (1963), even directs the performers to play certain "colours", suggesting that music has gone beyond just analogy with another discipline, but has absorbed its language and ideas to the degree that the music's identity as music is no longer unquestioned. We have seen this to be partly the case

with Berio's setting from Ulysses. The novel maintains a firm grip on its identity as literature, the music less so. This is, perhaps, a noticeable difference between Modernist and post-Modernist aesthetics, the former keen to retain the tradition it inherited whilst creating radically new structures to stretch the identity of the genre, but always managing to contain this identity.

CODA

After such diversity, what knowledge?

I have set out to explore the various ways in which music affected two of Modernism's greatest literary exponents, and its part in stretching the general boundaries of literary expression. I have avoided a cataloguing approach to the matter of Joyce's musical references (this work has been done thoroughly by authors such as Zack Bowen, James Carens and M.J.C. Hodgart), and have avoided close work on Finnegans Wake as, more than Four Quartets, it seems distant from the earlier Modernist aesthetic under discussion, despite being the summit of Joyce's personal musical achievement.

Some of the most useful conclusions which may be drawn from such a diverse survey as this seem to be comparisons between the work of Eliot and Joyce. These two writers neatly complement each other within the shared topic of music, in respect of the genres of poetry and prose, their different personalities, and the contrasting directions in which their work developed. The fact that both Eliot and Joyce were particularly fascinated by literature as language, often drawing attention to the medium of the words, rather than the things the words convey, implies that structure becomes important by default. Words dominate over content and, in losing the requirement for specific referents from a wider context, their function naturally becomes more akin to that of the notes in music. This tendency in their writing, then, might be said to constitute the abstract aspect of its musicality.

Looking above this deep structure, at the surface manifestations of music, some degree of contrast emerges. This is partly because of the different genres, poetry and prose, that each was predominantly working within. It could be argued that, with Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, Joyce intended to write novels, but in fact found himself writing poetic prose, as his musical instincts forced him to. Ulysses was his last true prose experiment which could sufficiently contain these instincts before they crossed a formal boundary. As has been seen, there is an increasingly noticeable

physical side to the way Joyce's music emerges, a dimension of Eliot's musicality which reaches its peak much earlier, in The Waste Land. Music at its most intense in the later Eliot is of a contemplative and transcendental kind. His late poetry did not lose itself in technique or over-sophistication, but became a quest to express the spiritual development of the artist, in terms understandable by the non-specialist reader of poetry, rather in the way J.W.N. Sullivan describes Beethoven as having done.

Joyce's experiments with musical structures deliberately force the analogy further than the literary medium will tolerate it. He shows that it is clearly impossible to write a fugue from the words on the page. It is the *suggestion* of structures, conveyed by the mode of writing, which is a manifestation of musical form. The mere act of imposing an external scheme, the Homeric parallel, is itself a justification for musical experimentation. He also shows just how close to music words *can* become, by insistently amplifying sound over sense, to the point, in Finnegans Wake, at which the prose all but dissolves into poetry.

There are some general points about the relationship between music and literature that should not be overlooked. Any study which probes this subject will face the question of whether music was a result of speech and language, or whether the reverse process is true. Clearly, it is both: the forms and gestures of music derive from patterns of speech and rhetoric; speech is based on sound, which, unlike speech, is a part of nature, not artificial. Both music and words have links with more primitive beginnings, and possess the ability to become woven into highly sophisticated systems of discourse. However, poetry has a more directly physical link with music than prose, in respect of metre, rhythm, and, in English, the importance of stress. This is perhaps why Joyce's frustrated musical ambitions emerge in a prose style that is continually gravitating towards the condition of music. It is also probably the reason why Eliot's poetry, despite there being more candidates for analogy, ultimately eludes precise parallel with any piece of music for, being poetry, it may assume any shape it chooses.

One explanation why literature and music should have found themselves as mutual allies during the Modernist period can be found in their differing resources. Western

music, with its development of increasingly complex divisions of sound, and with the evolution of musical instruments, has, to a certain extent, been dependent on technology. Developments in electronic music have enabled interest in such things as microtonal music of the East, begun in the Modernist period, to widen the Western musical vocabulary. No such resources have been required for innovation in literature, merely creative energy and an impulse for experimentation. The cue for this experimentation, however, has often been given by innovations in the more physically observable world, which, in the early twentieth-century, included music. It is likely that through a general awareness that structural paradigms could be grafted from one art form to another, the interests of Eliot and Joyce were stirred in the relevance to literature of the more traditional musical forms, such as fugue and sonata form.

There may be a slight irony in the relative lack of acknowledgement Eliot and Joyce gave to music of their own age. However, this does seem to confirm a greater concern on their part for music as an ongoing culture, bequeathed by the innovations of previous generations, rather than just a temporary fascination with the latest experiments in the world of music. Hence there is a stronger case in their work for a true alliance between music and literature, as against a passing interest in an era of music that happened to be especially experimental. Had Eliot and Joyce been born a generation or so later, they may have looked more specifically to early twentieth-century composers' working methods. The body of music that constitutes the reactions of subsequent composers to Eliot and Joyce's work is, in its prodigiousness and diversity, probably the best demonstration of this inherent musicality.

Musical examples

The order of musical examples on the accompanying audio tape is as follows:

1. Gioachino Rossini, theme from the overture William Tell, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, first subject of the first movement of Symphony No. 40 in G minor (0', 30").
2. Franz Schubert, second subject from the first movement of Symphony No. 8 (0', 51").
3. Ludwig van Beethoven, main theme from the last movement of Symphony No. 3 (1', 08").
4. Anton Webern, complete third movement from 6 Orchesterstücke, op.6 (0', 55").
5. C.P.E. Bach, opening of the first movement of Harpsichord Concerto Wq. 43/2 (1', 32").
6. C.P.E. Bach, lead in to the second movement of Harpsichord Concerto Wq. 43/2 (1', 20").
7. C.P.E. Bach, complete first movement of Symphony for Strings Wq. 182/1 (3', 40").
8. C.P.E. Bach, complete second movement of Symphony for Strings Wq. 182/1 (4', 02").
9. C.P.E. Bach, Freye Fantasie in F# minor Wq. 67 (12', 40").
10. Luciano Berio, Thema (Omaggio à Joyce) (8', 30").

Details of these sound recordings, and the performers, are given in the bibliography.

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